

DRC announces commissioners

A learning disabled woman is among 14 members appointed in January to a new body aimed at enforcing disabled people's rights.



Eve Rank-Petruzzello (left) will work as a member of the Disability Rights Commission (DRC)

and will be the first learning disabled person to sit on such a major public body.

The DRC's work will include developing the law, educating business and service providers, and investigating, conciliating and taking legal action in cases of discrimination. It will begin in April.

Ms Rank-Petruzzello said:

"Very often people with learning disabilities do not get their voice heard by Government or society. That is why this is important."

She is already a spokesperson for the learning disability group People First.

The 15 commissioners, including chairman Bert Massie, appointed in October, are drawn from disability charities, public bodies, business and union backgrounds. There are people with special knowledge of Scotland and Wales. Ten of the commissioners are disabled.

Richard Wood, chief executive of the British Council of

Disabled People, is concerned at a lack of disabilities among the commissioners brought in to represent business.

And he added: "It is profoundly disappointing that there are not more disabled people from organisations controlled by disabled people."

But Mr Massie said blind, deaf, speech-impaired and learning disabled people were on the commission, along with wheelchair users and someone with a history of mental illness.

He said: "I don't think you can really argue that the disability community is not represented."

Those with business interests would help influence industry and assist the DRC in understanding business concerns when it was making policies, he

added. This would not mean the DRC sacrificed its principles.

Commissioners will work at least 20 days a year for £134 a day plus expenses.



Write stuff: Juri Ho, who is learning disabled and partially sighted, is one of the disabled Japanese artists whose calligraphy work is on show at the Project Ability Centre for Developmental Arts, Glasgow, from 20 April. The work is also on-line at <http://devan.ne.jp/ableart/>

The new commissioners: Saghir Alam, a solicitor; Kay Allen, equal opportunities manager at B&Q; Jane Campbell, co-director of the National Centre for Independent Living; Michael Devenney, research fellow at the Centre for Institutional Studies at the University of East London; Richard Exell, a senior policy officer at the Trades Union Congress; Dr Kevin Fitzpatrick, chair of Disability Wales; John Hougham, chairman of the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service until 1 May when he becomes the DRC vice chairman; Peter Humphrey, a former senior managing consultant with Price Waterhouse; Colin Low, vice chairman of the Royal National Institute for the Blind; Elaine Noad, director of community services at South Ayrshire Council; Eve Rank-Petruzzello, a spokesperson at People First; Philippa Russell, director of the Council for Disabled Children; James Strachan, chief executive of the Royal National Institute for Deaf People; and Jenny White, legal advisor to the Electricity Association.

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Remploy strike ballot

Industrial action at Remploy is a step nearer following a vote by union shop stewards.

Shop stewards from unions representing 87 per cent of the 6,000-strong workforce at Remploy's 80 factories voted on a set of measures at a conference in Manchester on 19 January.

Measures passed included a ballot on industrial action if

needed, a candlelit vigil outside the House of Commons and a motorcade from Aberdeen to London.

The actions are designed to highlight plans announced last August to close 17 Remploy factories and reduce the workforce by 1,000. The unions are calling for an expansion of Remploy's factory programme

and for greater support for people entering mainstream employment.

Phil Davis of the GMB union said: "If we balloted for industrial action today we would get it. But the Government and Remploy have an excellent chance to avert all this by having some common-sense discussions."



Feed me now! A Japanese company is developing a laser-controlled robot arm which allows people with impaired arm mobility to feed themselves. Operators can control Secom's My-Spoon robot with head movements via a special patch mounted on the cheek.

NHS to launch digital hearing aid scheme

Digital hearing aids will be available on the NHS at 20 sites across the country under a pilot scheme to start in April.

Digital aids are currently only available privately and cost up to £2,000 each.

Provision may be extended across the NHS when the scheme is assessed in two years' time.

Minicabs fail on access

Private-hire minicabs should be brought within disability access laws, national charities have said.

The call came after Wandsworth council said minicab firms in London were charging up to 66 per cent extra to carry guide dogs.

Peter Barker, manager of the Joint Mobility Unit (JMU) run by charities for blind people, said: "This is appalling discrimination."

Under the new private-hire vehicle law, London authorities are this year expected to have power to demand that minicabs carry guide dogs and charge no extra. Other UK authorities already have this power, but it is discretionary.

The JMU wants minicabs everywhere to be forced to carry the dogs. Black cabs are expected to have to do this under Disability Discrimination Act rules to be announced later this year. The Government is to review whether minicabs can be included.

• Separate rules came into force in January making all black cabs in London wheelchair accessible. But wheelchair user Jill Stewart of Scope is concerned that, in new cabs made by London Taxis International, the ramp could be too steep without an extension that is kept in the boot.

The company said the extension was only needed when there was not a curb.



Hollow victory? Sir David Mitchell (left), Steven Norris (top, centre) and Glenda Jackson, all former transport ministers, and Bert Massie, chairman of the Disability Rights Commission (front), celebrated accessible black cabs in London. But is all as rosy as it seems?

Folic acid considered

The Government is considering putting folic acid into flour after a report found it could cut incidence of spina bifida and related conditions in newborn babies by 41 per cent.

The report* by the Committee on Medical Aspects of Food and Nutrition, published in January, recommends adding 240 micrograms of the vitamin to every 100g of flour.

It estimates that, at this level, 38 of the 93 babies born with neural tube defects (NTDs), including spina bifida, in England and Wales in

1998 would not have had the condition. Around 400 pregnancies were affected by spina bifida in England and Wales that year.

For maximum effect women must take folic acid before conception and in the first few weeks of pregnancy, but an estimated 50 per cent of pregnancies in Britain are unplanned.

Scientists believe the vitamin, which occurs naturally in small amounts in leafy, green vegetables, can also help protect against heart disease and bowel cancer.

Minister for Public Health Yvette Cooper said: "We are keen to encourage measures to prevent spina bifida and other NTDs and will be consulting widely on these conclusions."

Andrew Russell, executive director of the Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus, said: "We hope that, at the end of the consultation period, the Minister will allow the highest level of fortification possible to get the best results."

*Folates and the Prevention of Disease, *publications department*, tel: 0870 600 5522.

Over-65s care payment move

The Government is in the next two months to give people over 65 the money to buy their own care directly.

Like younger people, they will be able to get funds from their local authority to pay for care.

Frances Hasler, co-director of the National Centre for Independent Living, welcomed the lifting of the age restriction on payments under the Community Care (Direct Payments) Act. She said: "This gives older people the same range of choices as younger people, which is right and good."

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Benefits boost

The Government is to give extra benefit to disabled people who need to go into hospital or who live in local authority care.

Social Security Minister Hugh Bayley announced in January that people going into hospital would be able to get Attendance Allowance (AA) or Disability Living Allowance (DLA) on the day they are discharged. They are already entitled to these benefits on the day they enter hospital.

The move will help disabled people who, for instance, go into hospital regularly on Fridays and Saturdays to give their carers a break.

It will be worth £1.5m per year and will benefit 50,000 people.

And disabled people paying for the full cost of their care in local authority residential care homes will also be able to receive DLA or AA.

Previously these payments

were only available for those in private homes.

This will cost £4m a year and help 2,000 people.

Pauline Thompson, policy officer at Age Concern, said: "We warmly welcome these changes. People who are self funding in local authority homes feel very aggrieved that they pay the full cost and cannot get the benefits. And it will be welcome for people going into hospital for respite care."

RADAR appoints Mansell



SPINAL INJURIES ASSOCIATION

Peter Mansell is to be chief executive of disability charity RADAR, which has 500 member groups. He replaces Bert Massie, who has become chair of the Disability Rights Commission (DRC).

Peter Mansell, a wheelchair user, will be 42 on 1 February, his first day in the job. He was chief executive of the Spinal Injuries Association from December '95 to October last year, when he moved to the Department of Health (DOH) as a policy manager.

Quizzed about the swift move from the DOH, he said: "There are a few jobs that I would want and RADAR is one that is very influential. If I didn't go for it, it might not come up again for five or ten years."

Mansell thought there would always be a role for RADAR to help disabled people and organisations and lobby policy-makers: "Lots of people think the DRC will solve all our problems but many of us know that is not the case."

Chairman of RADAR Trevan Hingston talked of Peter Mansell's knowledge of disability issues, his commitment and wide management experience, while Bert Massie thought he would strengthen RADAR's financial administration. He said: "Every organisation changes, and I feel RADAR is in very good hands."

Brave Scots

A bill which allows people with a mental incapacity to appoint representatives to look after their affairs has been introduced into the Scottish parliament.

Under the Adults with Incapacity Bill, people with reduced capacity due to dementia, severe learning disability, stroke, head injury or similar will be able to appoint attorneys or guardians to release bank funds and make decisions about medical treatment on their behalf. The bill was introduced on 17 January by Scotland's Justice Minister Jim Wallace.

Mr Wallace said: "There is an overwhelming need to reform the law and make it eas-

ier to carry out legal steps such as selling a house or signing an important document."

Campaigners elsewhere have welcomed the bill, hoping it will pave the way for similar legislation in England and Wales.

The British Government published a policy document in October 1999 committing itself to changing the law on mental incapacity "when parliamentary time allows".

Richard Kramer, head of campaigns at Mencap, told DN: "What is happening in Scotland is very important. There is a huge gap in the law at the moment. Carers currently have no legal authority to act, even with simple things like aspirin."



FORD MOTOR COMPANY

Things to come: Rachel Carter may have helped shape the future. Rachel helped design a futuristic All-Access Ford car for disabled drivers, a model of which is on display in the Millennium Dome. Sumon Thakur (centre) was also a member of the design team.

Euthanasia bill panned

A bill designed to prevent involuntary euthanasia has been criticised by leading disability groups.

The private member's bill, introduced by Conservative MP Anne Winterton, aims to prevent doctors from intentionally bringing about the death of patients.

But the Alzheimer's Society claims it will lead to doctors artificially prolonging people's lives, causing them suffering and reducing their dignity.

Ms Winterton's bill comes against a background of public concern over the treatment of elderly patients and the recent publication of British Medical Association guidelines for doctors on withdrawing treatment

and withholding food and water from patients. The Medical Treatment (Prevention of Euthanasia) Bill is to have its second reading on 25 January.

Harry Cayton, chief executive of the Alzheimer's Society said: "Many of us who are involved in the care of the old, frail and mentally incapacitated and are campaigning for improvements in that care are as strongly opposed to such a bill as we are to euthanasia itself."

A spokesperson for Help the Aged said: "This bill is quite black and white in terms of withholding treatment. Each case is different and needs to be handled differently, so we do have reservations about it."

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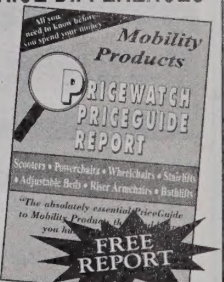
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Cricket funds blow

Britain's only blind and partially sighted cricket team may have to pull out of an Australian tour because of a lack of funding.

The Blind Cricket Council team was due to play against Australia and New Zealand in an Ashes-type tour starting in April. But an unnamed sponsor has withdrawn support at the last minute, leaving the

team £20,000 short of the £50,000 needed to attend. British Blind Sport, the charity which is organising the tour, is now trying to raise the money from other sources.

The tour would be the first time the team had represented Britain in the Antipodes and its second overseas tour.

Georgina Hare, head of fundraising at British Blind

Sport, said: "I was in tears when it happened, and the rest of the committee and the players were all deeply saddened. However, we've had some good indications of support and we've got our fingers and toes crossed that money will continue to come in."

British Blind Sport, tel: 01926 424247.

Honours for a new age

National figures in the disability field featured in the 2000 New Year Honours list.

Sally Greengross (*below*), director general of Age Concern England and a member of many government and professional advisory committees in the UK and Europe, became a peer.

Colin Low (*right*), vice chair of the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB), Bert

Massie, chair of the Disability Rights Commission, and Michael Whitlam, previously of the Royal National Institute for Deaf People and the Red Cross, received CBEs.

OBEs included wheelchair athlete Tanni Grey-Thompson, Susan Scott-Parker, chief executive of the Employers' Forum on Disability, Peter Barker of the RNIB and the Disabled Persons' Transport Advisory Committee, and Roger

Robinson, director of Artsline. Other OBEs were awarded to Lady (Joan) Bader, Alan Cheyney, Alistair Hill QC, John Hunter, Eileen Lowe and Brian McGinnis.

John Tavener, composer of *A New Beginning*, which saw out the century at the Dome, and *Fall and Resurrection*, which greeted the new one, becomes a knight; he has Marfan's syndrome.

Among MBEs for services to disabled people or carers were William Beaugie, Suzanne Elliot, Malcolm Hood, Martin Thacker, Dorothy Till, Marian Vanstone and Noel Young.



AGE CONCERN ENGLAND



Running success: Sprinter Alan Stuart, 18, is the first disabled athlete to receive an Athlete of the Month Award in the Bank of Scotland Talented Young Athlete Programme. Alan, who has learning difficulties, is also Glasgow City Council Disability Athlete of 1999.

In brief

Consultant register

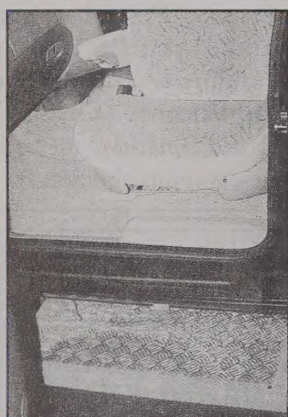
The Centre for Accessible Environments, a charity which provides information on how to make buildings accessible, is launching a register of access consultants.

The database will include access auditors and people with a background in building who can give technical advice on

alterations. The centre is inviting consultants to apply for membership; the register will be up and running on 1 March. For information, contact Mary Noble, tel: 0207 234 0434.

Telecom appointment

Bob Twitchin has been appointed chairman of the Advisory Committee on telecommunications for Disabled and Elderly People. He comes from a career in ICI and BT and is a wheelchair user.



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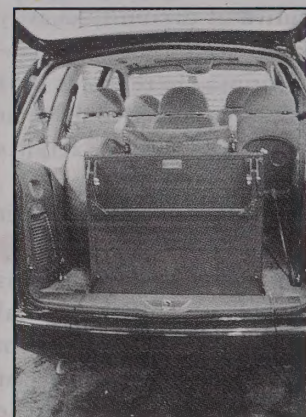


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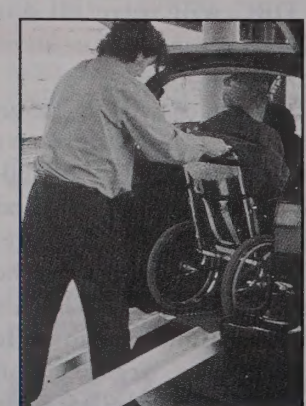
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Hotel room mix-up

A pregnant disabled woman who recently won £600,000 damages after work accidents is angry at her treatment by a top London hotel.

Alison Hockaday, 34, won the money from South West Durham Health Authority after falls at work. She was backed by her union Unison.

When she visited London in December to get her cheque, the union had booked adjoining rooms at the Shaw Park Plaza

hotel so she could be helped by her sister at night. But the hotel let out the adjoining room to someone else.

Ms Hockaday said she complained but felt "insulted" at the attitude and explanations of staff. She said: "I got the feeling that because I was disabled they thought I was mentally impaired."

The hotel gave her a new room. It did not adjoin her sister's but was close by.

The union is not satisfied

with the hotel's response to a letter it has sent them.

But the hotel, which opened last year, said Mrs Hockaday had not complained during her stay. The mistake had been down to "human error" and the new room met the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

"This hotel has more facilities for disabled people than any hotel in London," a spokesperson added.

Thanks!

Following our letter to subscribers who receive *DN* free of charge, many people responded very generously with donations.

This is a huge thank you to all those who gave us a donation – it is a wonderful help to us.

VAT turn

Customs and Excise has decided that value added tax (VAT) will not be imposed on specialist disability equipment.

Several companies had been told by their local tax inspectors that VAT would have to be added on items such as boards which help wheelchair users transfer to cars (*DN*, October). But now the VAT Policy Directorate of Customs and Excise has reversed the decisions for most of the disputed products.

The reversal was based on letters written by the products' manufacturers guaranteeing that the products were designed specifically for disabled people.

Richard Clarke, managing director of one of the companies, Grinstead Medical, said: "It certainly is a relief. Now we can compete on a level playing field, the same as everyone else."

A spokesperson for Customs and Excise said: "We do have a national policy, but we allow local officers to interpret it. With these borderline cases it is probably better that the decision is taken centrally."

Wanted!

DN is looking for your gardening experiences and for arts reviewers and illustrators. Send your details to the address on page 2.

And it is still not too late to apply to be on our nationwide readers' panel. See *DN*, January, for details or call Dan Batten, tel: 0207 619 7323.

Education moves

The Government has announced the introduction of a new "disability in education" bill to implement recommendations made by the Disability Rights Task Force.

The bill, to be introduced later this parliamentary session, will cover Task Force recommendations to extend the Disability Discrimination Act to schools, and post-16 and higher education (*DN*, January). It will also look at special educational needs provision.

The new bill was announced by Education and Employment Minister Baroness Blackstone on 17 January. It will include measures to ensure local authorities make progress on schools' accessibility and that disabled pupils are treated fairly by schools and local education authorities.

Brian Lamb, head of public affairs at Scope, said: "There now seems to be an emergent strategy for education and the Government is really moving forward in this area. It is beginning to look like a coherent package and we welcome that."

Baroness Blackstone said: "We want to give full and proper attention to the Task Force recommendations. The best way to do this is through a free-standing bill."

• Disabled Students' Allowances are to be available to part-time higher education students with disabilities in England and Wales from September 2000.

As many as 2,000 disabled people will benefit, according to Skill: National Bureau for Students with Disabilities.

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Obituaries

Morigue Cornwell writes:
David Griffiths MBE, the founder and chief

officer of the Mobility Information Service (MIS), died in his sleep on the morning of 31 December 1999.

David set up the MIS, Shrewsbury, in 1979, as an information and advice service for disabled people by disabled people; it was then, and is still, a unique mobility service. In 1989 David was awarded an MBE for this work.

Although David always put considerable time and energy into MIS, it by no means took all his attention; he formed the Disabled Motorists' Federation in 1972 and was always very

active in Europe as well as this country. He was well known for his campaigning work for disabled would-be drivers in Italy and for his efforts to get suitable equipment and information to motorists in Russia. He was involved in RAMP (the Route-finding and Access Maps Programme).

David was never afraid to speak his mind and had a highly tuned sense of humour. He held a passionate belief that all disabled people have a right to mobility. His vehicle knowledge was unsurpassable and will be sorely missed. Many non-disabled people, including colleagues in other mobility centres, learned a great deal from David and his philosophy. *Mary Wilkinson writes:* David has been *DN*'s motoring correspondent since the mid-'80s. His unique knowledge and style gave an authority to our motoring reviews. We shall miss him and his characteristic chuckle very much.

Rachel Hurst writes: **Sir John Wilson** CBE DCL, died at the age of 80 in November.

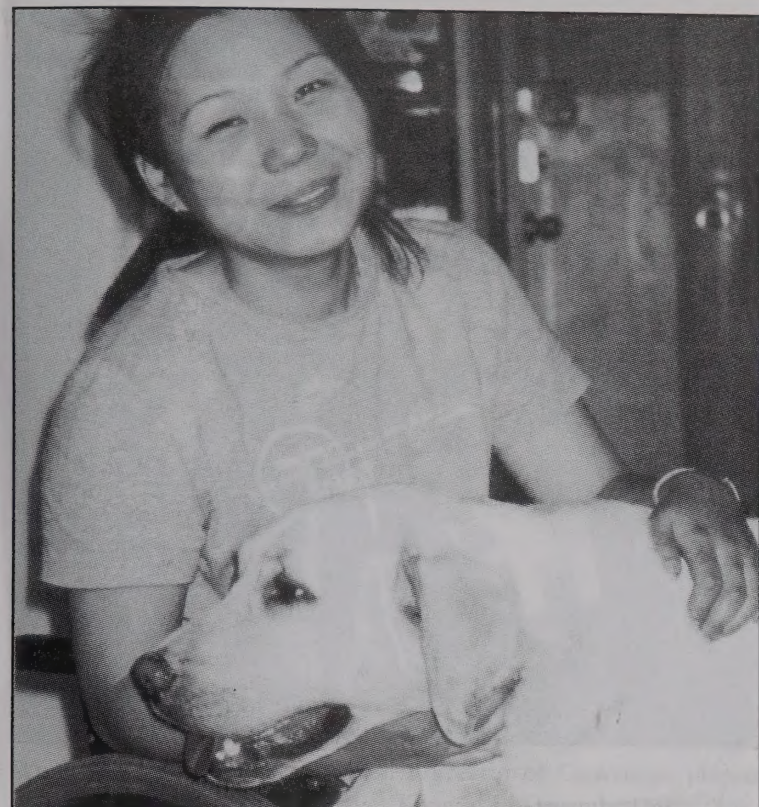
Sir John was always an innovator, a man of quite exceptional vision in the field of disability. He knew what needed to be done and went ahead and did it.

Blind from the age of 12, he worked at the Royal National Institute for the Blind in the war. The RNIB was at that time run by sighted trustees. At one of the board meetings, a trustee talked about them representing blind people. John got to his feet (not something someone in his

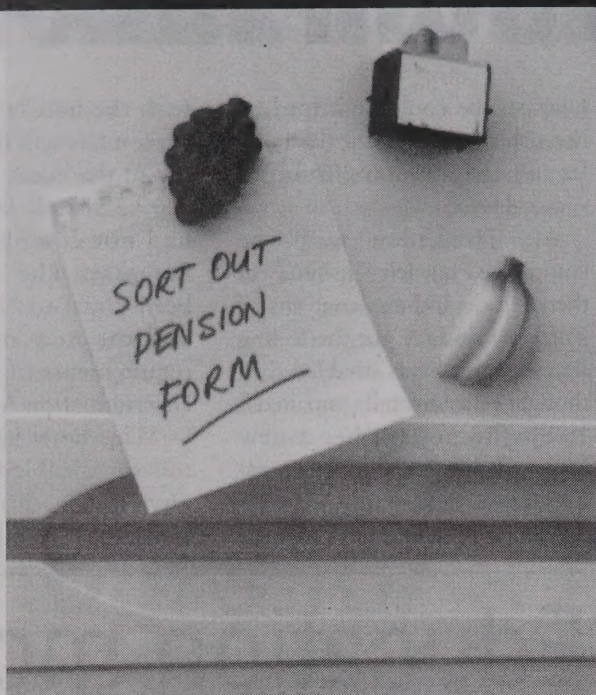
position should have done) and said: "You no more represent blind people than a butcher represents his sausages."

He became a co-founder of the National Federation of the Blind and inspired the Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind, now known as Sightsavers. As director (1950-1983) and then vice president, he travelled extensively with his wife Jean, forming organisations of the blind in some 30 Commonwealth countries and pioneering activities for the prevention of blindness. His strategy for the prevention of disability worldwide led to the Impact programme, and he initiated the UN Global Project, which became Disability Awareness in Action in 1992.

SAMSUNG UK



Woman's best friend: Visitors to Crufts in Birmingham this March can learn about Samsung's Dogs for the Disabled scheme in Korea. As well as training dogs for people like Eunhee Lee (above), the company is designing a dog harness with built-in satellite guidance.



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MIS-SOLD A PENSION?

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Winning wheels: Linda Ling (left), director of Gowrings, presented Elaine Sloane (centre) and her daughter Olivia with a Chairman Kangoo in December after they came first in a DN/Gowrings competition launched in July 1999. The Sloanes, from Cheshire, will have use of the £15,000 car for a year.

More cannabis trials to begin



People with multiple sclerosis (MS) are to take part in medical trials of cannabis extract in a study funded by the Medical Research Council (MRC).

The three-year study, to be carried out by Dr John Zajicek, a consultant neurologist at Derriford Hospital in Plymouth, will involve 660 people with MS. From the summer, people with MS will be recruited all over the country. Would-be participants should contact their own doctor.

Dr Zajicek said: "We hope the study will provide definite evidence about whether taking

cannabis helps people with MS." Meanwhile, GW Pharmaceuticals, a company which will use volunteers supplied through DN, expects to start trials by April (DN, January).

- An independent inquiry by the Police Foundation is expected to call for a relaxation of the ban on cannabis for medical use. The report is due in March, but at the time of going to press the foundation would not confirm the story.

- Citizens in Maine, USA, have voted to legalise the medicinal use of marijuana. The new law lets patients use marijuana on a doctor's advice.

Care campaign launched

Disability groups were poised to launch a new campaign against care charges as DN went to press.

The campaign will call on MPs to sign up to a charter against charging and encourage disabled people to clog up the system by appealing against charges. It is led by the Coalition on Charging, an umbrella group of major disability charities.

The coalition plans to supply disabled people with action

packs telling them how to prove they cannot afford the charges.

Mencap's Simon Wright, chairman of the coalition, said: "Ideally, authorities may have 50 appeals in one day, which will be a pain for them."

News of the campaign comes as Hammersmith and Fulham, one of only five councils in the country still providing a free home help service, was deciding whether to introduce charges. Those not on Income Support would pay

at least £5 per week for the service.

Neil Betteridge, head of projects and campaigns at national disability charity RADAR, said: "This would be another nail in the coffin for domiciliary care. The people suffering are the people least able to speak for themselves."

For more information about the care charge campaign, contact Simon Wright, tel: 0207 696 5567, or e-mail: simon.wright@mencap.org.uk

DAVID MATTHEWS EDE & RAVENSCROFT PHOTOGRAPHY



Cheers! Ian Hirst (bottom, centre) from Ormskirk, Lancashire, recently received a PhD in Philosophy from the Open University. The 60-year-old retired computer programmer, who has cerebral palsy and cancer, was accompanied by his four children.

Car charity criticism

A charity providing cars for disabled people has been accused of failing to provide adequate courtesy cars to people who have accidents.

Motability was criticised by one of its customers, Katrina Grounseil, who has spina bífida. Mrs Grounseil's car needed repairing after a crash with another Motability customer.

While she had her own insurance, she had to claim from Motability's insurers Royal & Sun Alliance (Motability) because the other driver was at fault.

But Mrs Grounseil, 37, of Essex, was told she could not get a car with hand controls for braking and accelerating.

She said: "I find this very strange for an organisation

which provides cars for disabled people."

Neil Lewis, 23, of Shropshire, had similar problems when he had an accident in his Motability car in 1998.

"It seems absolutely barmy," he said.

But Lisa Witherington, customer services manager at Motability, said: "All courtesy cars are subject to availability at a customer's dealership or recommended repairer. As 90 per cent of Motability Scheme customers can drive without any adaptations, the cost of having a vehicle such as this on the forecourt is not feasible."

People unable to get a suitable replacement car could claim cash instead, she said.

What's in DN next month?



DAVID BLUNKETT'S DAY

Rod Hermeston shadows the Education Secretary and finds it's all go.

PARENTING

Disabled mums and dads share their experiences.

HOLIDAYS (3)

More ideas from near and far, plus DN's holiday competition winner.

CHECKOUT - TOASTERS

Don't get burnt buying one - Dan Batten checks out the best.

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Tel: +44 (0)1483 211222, fax: +44 (0)1483 224541.

In brief

It's a girl!

Congratulations to Stephen and Penny Greenwood from Bradford whose baby Rachael was born at 6am on 10

November weighing 7lbs 1oz. The Greenwoods, who both have epilepsy, are being observed by social services and hope to be able to take their baby home this month. A hearing to decide if the Greenwoods can keep their baby has been set for May (DN, November).

DN gives a round-up of some of the disability stories that have appeared in the media over the past few weeks

Orange badge shake-up plan

The Government is to review the orange badge parking scheme following widespread criticism of the system.

Transport Minister Keith Hill announced the plans recently following recommendations by the Disabled Persons' Transport Advisory Committee.

The review will follow up complaints including non-recognition of orange badges in central London, over-issuing by some local authorities and the lack of powers available to the police to enforce the scheme.

Opinions of disabled people will be sought as part of the consultation process and a public document will be produced.

Mr Hill said: "We have concluded that a review of the scheme is necessary to ensure that it continues to serve its fundamental purpose: to enable severely disabled people to park close to their destinations."

Douglas Campbell, executive director of the Disabled Drivers' Association, welcomed the move.

"We have been calling for a review like this for a long time," he said.

If you have any comments on the orange badge scheme, send them to DN at the address on page 2. We will pass them on to the Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions.

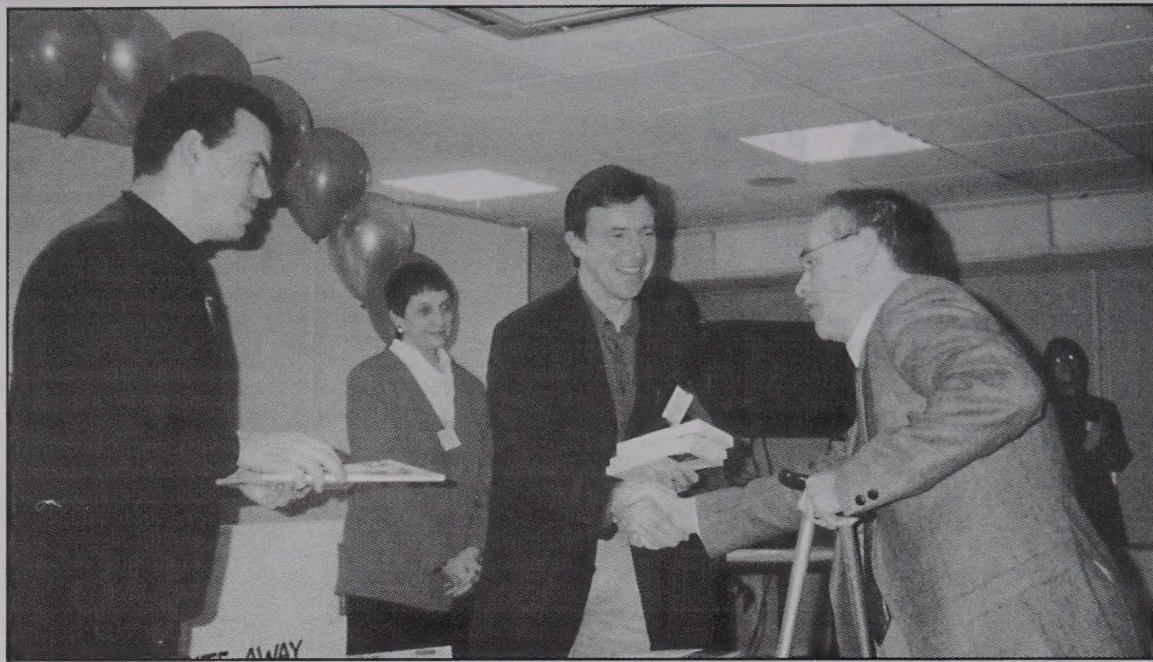
Orthotics action

The Government is taking action to ensure greater consistency of orthotics provision across the NHS, according to Health Minister John Hutton.

Mr Hutton made his announcement at a conference recently organised by the disability products campaign group emPower. He also emphasised the Government's commitment to rehabilitation

and called for the development of better orthotic devices.

Sam Gallop, chairman of emPower, said: "I am delighted that John Hutton and the Department of Health are acting to help promote orthotics in the new NHS. Disablement Services have for many years been the Cinderella of the NHS, and orthotics has always been at the bottom of the pile."



Signed, sealed, delivered: Letter-writing competition winner John Griffin (right) received his prize of gift tokens and signed books from journalist and author John McCarthy (centre) at Arsenal Football Club in December. Mr Griffin, who has cerebral palsy, wrote a letter to Tony Benn MP. The competition was organised by Write Away, the national penfriend club for disabled people.

SUE RENTON

Company settles

A major construction company has admitted discriminating against a man with a history of mental illness.

The company John Laing withdrew an offer of a £60,000-a-year job offer made to Andrew Watkiss in January 1999 after a medical examination revealed that he had had a schizophrenic illness.

Mr Watkiss, 46, was employed at the time as a company secretary for Unigate.

Mr Watkiss sued John Laing under the Disability Discrimination Act. The com-

pany admitted discrimination and made an out-of-court settlement for an undisclosed sum in December.

Mr Watkiss said: "I believe my case will strongly encourage employers to treat job applicants on their merits, rather than attaching stigma or misguided, stereotypical views."

Simon Foster, principal solicitor at mental health charity Mind, said: "People with mental health problems can now be confident that they have a fair chance to find work without fear of discrimination."

In brief

Tory carers pledge

Under a Conservative Government over-65s would qualify for Invalid Care Allowance and children's homes would be run by charities, churches and businesses.

These and other policies for a future Tory Government were announced by leader William Hague in December.

Cancer research

The largest cancer research centre in Europe was opened by Prince Charles in December.

The £25m Institute of Cancer Research in south-west London will bring together biologists and pharmacologists. It will house Britain's first ever laboratory dedicated solely to breast cancer research.

Internet drive

A new government drive to provide information and opportunity to visually impaired people via the internet was announced by Cabinet Office Minister Ian McCartney in December.

The policy is designed to give Britain a world-class internet presence and unlock the door to Government for thousands. Measures include increased access to government departments and increased access for visually impaired people.

NHS helpline

Medical advice is available over the telephone following the launch of NHS Direct in December.

The service, currently available in 65 per cent of England, offers consultations with trained medical practitioners. Tel 0845 4647, or go to www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

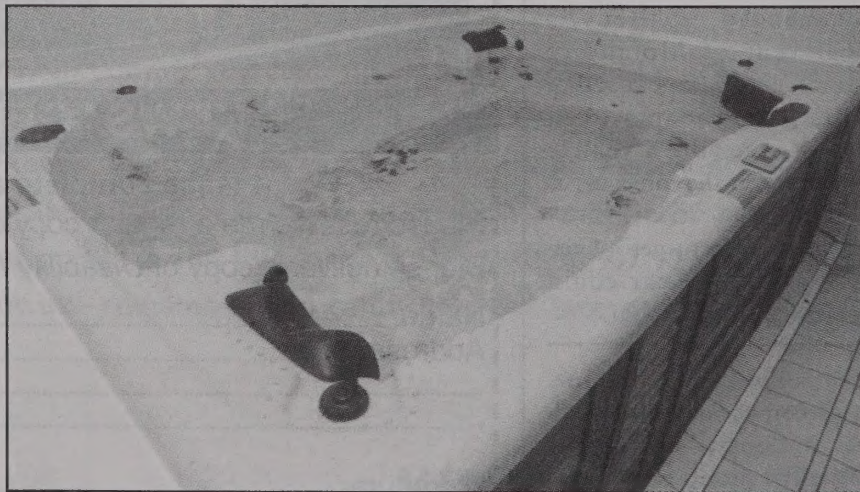
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Just how far will science go in trying to “repair” and “improve” the human body? Sally Brown takes a look into the future

Fix-it technology

Forget wheelchairs, walking frames and prosthetics – in the future, scientists may be able to repair spinal injuries, grow replacement limbs and heal disorders by altering our genes.

But how near are we now to repairing injuries and “curing” disorders? And what could it mean for disabled people?

Gene therapy

At some point gene therapy could be used to “remedy” conditions such as Huntington’s chorea and Duchenne muscular dystrophy.

Scientists believe that therapeutic genes could be introduced into the body via modified viruses known as vectors. These genes would then change the effect of “abnormal” genes.

According to Dr James M Wilson of the Institute for Human Gene Therapy at the University of Pennsylvania in the USA, this technique could be used to treat people with disorders such as haemophilia, sickle cell anaemia and even cancer eventually.

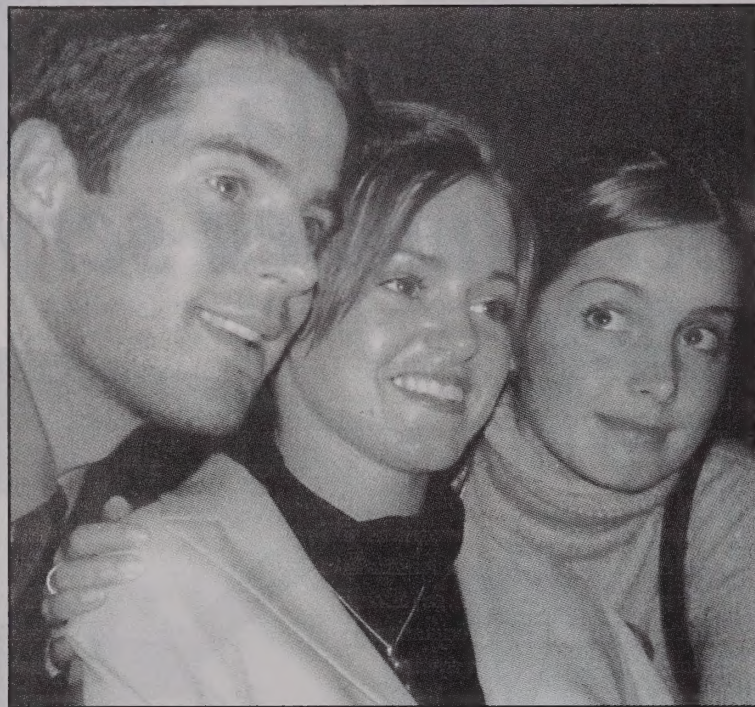
But a Muscular Dystrophy Campaign spokesman says: “The prospects of effective gene transfer, and therefore a useful treatment for this disorder, are a long way off.”

Spinal repair

Unlike other damage, spinal cord injuries do not heal. However, scientists now believe that in the future cell therapy could repair harm to the spine and central nervous system

Microphages are injected into the spine, where they are not normally found; they then cause nerves to regrow.

This process has been successfully tested in animals and trials on humans are



Science hopes: spinal injury fundraiser Gemma Quinn (centre) with footballer Jamie Redknapp and his pop singer wife Louise

(CNS) and overcome other neurological conditions.

Scientists from Proneuron Biotechnologies in Israel are testing a system which uses white blood cells called microphages, which the body uses to repair injuries.

planned. However, scientists believe the process can only take place within two weeks of an injury as after that the damage is irreversible.

A second therapy being tested by Proneuron uses white blood cells called T-lymphocytes to halt the process of secondary cell death that often follows spinal cord or other CNS injuries.

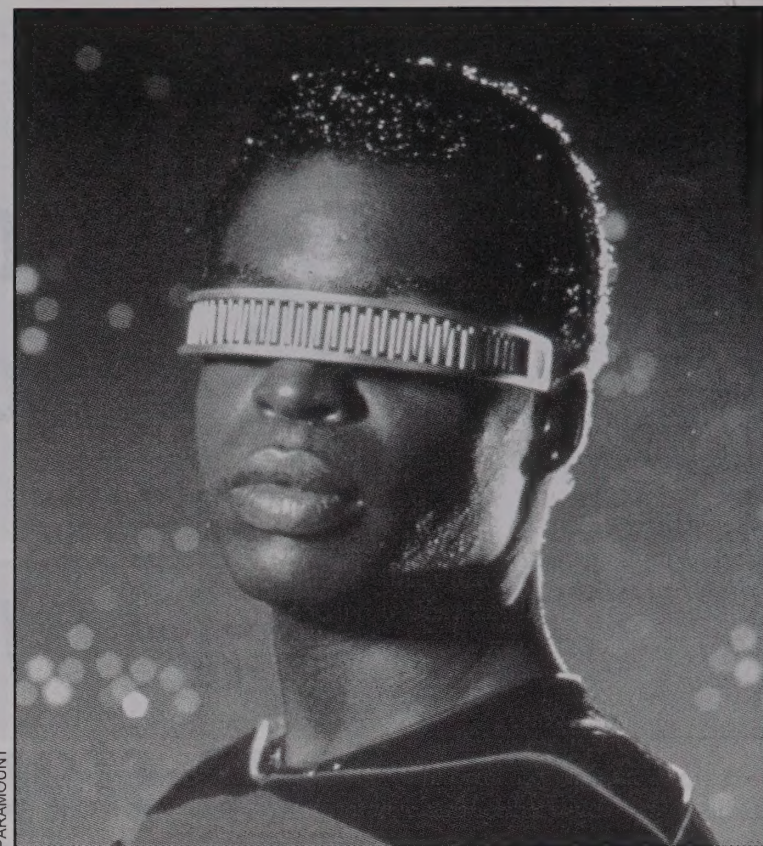
Many people with spinal injuries, including Christopher Reeve and International Spine Research Trust fundraiser Gemma Quinn, are keen for science to reverse their injuries.

Simon Barnes, promotions manager of the International Spinal Research Trust, believes treatment will be widely available within 12 years: “Now we have tangible proof of successful repair in the lab, we are very excited about what the future holds. The general indications are that spinal injury is on the way out.”

Bionic nerves

People who have had strokes could in the future regain the use of paralysed limbs with the help of electrodes implanted in their muscles.

Researchers led by Prof Gerald Loeb at the University of Southern California have developed electrodes no bigger than a grain of rice. Once injected into a muscle these electrodes, known as BIONs, can be



Face of the future? Jordi Laforge in *Star trek: The Next Generation*

activated to cause movement.

Loeb believes that eventually BIONs could enable someone with spinal cord injury or disability caused by stroke to grasp an object with their hand.

Eoin Redahan, director of the Stroke Association, says: “We welcome any news that could possibly bring relief to thousands of people who suffer stroke each year. But it is too early to comment on this particular research until full clinical trials have taken place.”

Retinal implants

Researchers in the US believe that within five years some blind people will be able to see with the help of a device similar to the visor worn by engineer Jordi Laforge in *Star Trek*. Singer Stevie Wonder is said to be the latest person to sign up as a guinea pig for tests at the Johns Hopkins Hospital in the US.

‘We are excited about what the future holds. The general indications are that spinal injury is on the way out’

The process involves bypassing damaged sections of the eye and electronically stimulating bunches of still healthy nerve cells behind the retina. This is done by implanting a chip containing electrodes in an area of the eye called the ganglia.

People who have taken part in trials were able to see colour, lights and basic shapes. To date 25 electrodes have been implanted for up to 90 minutes. In the future scientists hope to put in chips containing enough electrodes to receive images from a camera mounted on glasses or a visor.

Joe Korner of the Royal National Institute for the Blind

said: “This type of research could be useful, but what is not useful is all the hype surrounding it. It gets people’s hopes up and the general public thinks

‘What is not useful is all the hype. It gets people’s hopes up’

blindness has been ‘solved’. In the end, we are not at the stage where medical solutions are solutions. We are really looking for social change.”

Replacing body parts

The possibility of growing human limbs and organs in the laboratory may be nearer than we think. Scientists at Advanced Tissue Sciences (ATS) in California are already running the world’s first human skin factory using cells grown from human foreskins. Each foreskin produces an estimated 250,000 square feet of human skin which is then used to repair burns and other injuries.

Human cartilage, bone, liver, heart valves and blood vessels have also been grown. According to ATS president Gail Norton, it should be possible to create whole human organs and, eventually, even limbs ready for implantation.

Sam Gallop from the Limbless Association says: “It’s cloud cuckoo land, isn’t it? We prefer to concentrate on looking at more practical technology.”

Many disability groups are excited about these advances, while others are not so sure.

Of course, it makes sense for science to help people if it can.

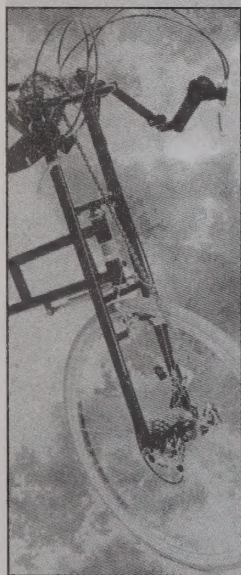
But if disabilities are “defects” that need to be corrected, where does that leave the millions of happy, successful and well-adjusted disabled people in the world today?



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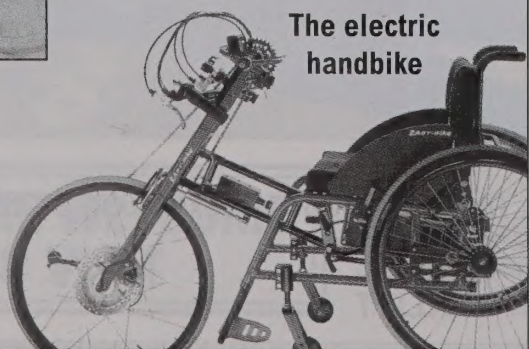
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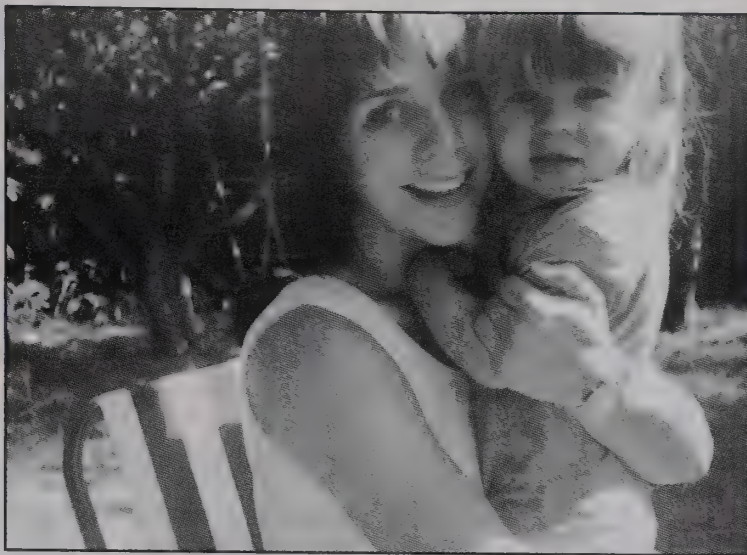
The Royal National Institute for the Blind has produced an information pack for staff working with people who have learning disabilities. *The Right to Sight* contains information on getting proper eye care. £89, tel: 0345 023 153.

Heart cell find

Dr Sian Harding of the Imperial College School of Medicine, London, has taken cells from hearts removed from people who have had transplants and inserted a gene which causes the cells to contract like healthy heart cells. She said that, if this could be made to work inside living people, "it would be like having a heart transplant without having a new heart".

Flu vaccine benefits

Elderly people in long-term care are at less risk of death when staff are vaccinated against flu. A study at Glasgow University looked at 20 long-term elderly care hospitals and offered vaccinations to staff in ten of them. Elderly people were then tested for flu. In hospitals offered the vaccine there was a significant decrease in deaths, though non-fatal flu infections did not fall.



Convinced of the benefits: Andrea Spinks with daughter Emily

Secretin doubts

A "miracle" autism drug may be no more effective than salt water, researchers have said.

Thousands of children in the USA and some in the UK are thought to have received the drug secretin after revelations that an autistic child in the USA improved after a single dose.

In a study of 56 children with autism, backed by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development in America, half were given secretin and the other half were given a salt solution.

The children given secretin showed no more improvement

than those given the salt solution.

Dr Duane Alexander, director of the Institute, said secretin should not be used to treat autism until the results of further tests were known.

But Andrea Spinks, 31, of North Yorkshire, believes that her daughter Emily, three, has benefited from secretin.

"I could tell a difference after the first injection. She started to sleep through the night. She has more social awareness and understanding." *National Autistic Society advice line, tel: 0207 903 3555.*

Eye patch help

Using an eye patch can dramatically improve reading in dyslexic children, researchers have found.

A team led by Professor John Stein, a physiologist at Oxford University, got children with dyslexia to wear a patch over their left eye for reading over a nine-month period. The study involved 144 children between seven and ten years old. Half of them used a patch.

The team found that those using the patch increased their reading speed twice as fast as those who did not have a patch.

Professor Stein said that about half of all dyslexics have

an eye problem. Children's eyes can cross over, causing letters to seem to float over each other. Using a patch allows a child to begin stabilising the eyes.

Professor Stein said: "People need to ask children who are having reading problems if the letters are moving around, and if they are they should be considered for this form of treatment. But it needs to be done by a professional because patching an eye in a child can actually cause vision to deteriorate if you do it too early and too much."

Professor Stein thought the technique could help a third of dyslexic children.

Seizures: tell your GP

People with epilepsy should not keep details of seizures from their doctor, researchers and a national charity have warned, after a study found that one in six of them may do so.

The survey of 122 people with epilepsy found that 18 had failed to report a seizure during the previous year.

The questionnaire was analysed by Dr John Appleby of the King's Fund, London,

and Dr Jamie Dalrymple of the University of East Anglia.

Overall 60 people anonymously reported seizures. Of these, 24 had a driving licence, but only six told this to their GP.

Professor John Duncan, medical director of the National Society for Epilepsy, said: "If someone goes to the doctor and says everything is fine when it isn't, then the doctor isn't able to give the best medical advice."

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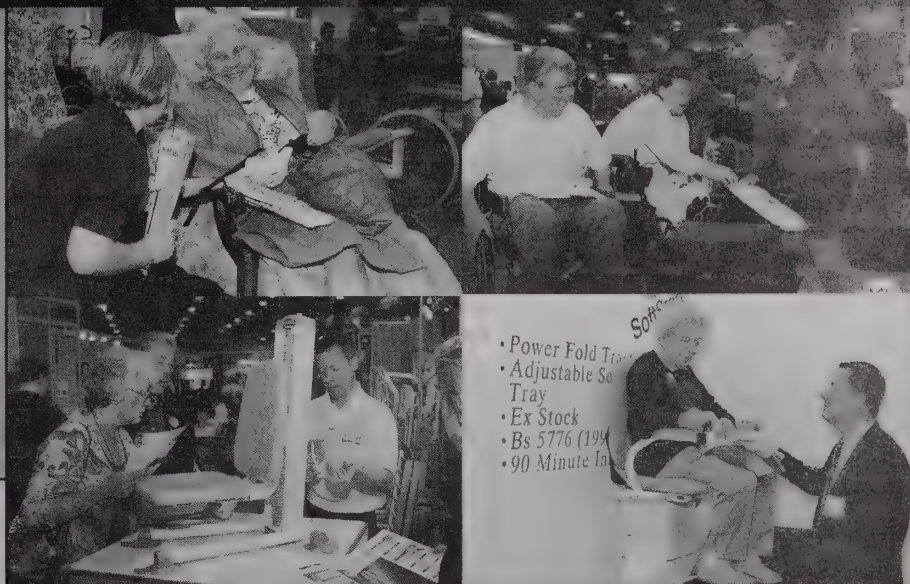
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All over down under

Bruce Cameron, writer for Lonely Planet and other guides, tells Rod Hermeston how he caught the travel bug

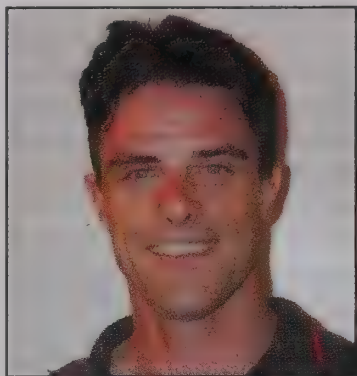
In his laid-back Australian drawl Bruce Cameron has plenty of travel tales to tell – and some of them are horror stories.

"I love travel, new places, people, cultural encounters and the occasional disaster," he says.

And he is helping other disabled travellers by contributing to guidebooks on Australia. He is also updating his own guide to access for disabled people in Australia.

As a wheelchair user, Bruce knows all about the difficulties travel can pose. Take his first trip abroad after his spinal injury, when he travelled to Fiji with a girlfriend.

"It was a nightmare," he says. "The airline left half my luggage behind, including my shower chair. When it all turned up on the last flight of the day, we had missed the transport to the resort. A cab was arranged and after a two-hour drive, we arrived at the resort, only to find the accessible room had been let to another couple. We were shifted into that room the next morning, to find the bathroom



nowhere near as accessible as I had been led to believe."

Or take the story of a stay in a villa in Tuscany, where Bruce had painstakingly planned his stay. On arrival, a door was too narrow for his chair – the unconventional solution of the manager was to tear out the door frame and a facing wall.

But the last thing Bruce wants to do is to put disabled people off travelling.

"The difficulties you encounter as a person with a disability are largely eliminated by planning and common sense. But problems are sometimes going to arise," he says.

As a non-disabled child, travel was always part of Bruce's life.

One of the first opportunities came when his father, the famous Australian artist Donald Cameron, was studying in London. Trips to Bali, Singapore and New Zealand followed.

Bruce, now 41, was spinally injured in a swimming accident when he was 17.

It was "tough" at first, but he did a degree and got a job in a major bank. After a while he started travelling again in Australia and, despite the Fiji trip, he did not lose the bug.

After about 12 years in banking, Bruce felt the need for a change. In 1992 he flew to London to travel and work in the UK. But the "amazing" lack of accessible accommodation in the capital led him to give up and travel round the UK and Europe instead.

When he returned to Australia, he decided to write an access guide to it. "I thought, well, Australia is easier than the UK, but we still have a huge lack of information."

He is now updating his book, *Easy Access Australia – A Travel Guide to Australia*,



AUSTRALIAN TOURIST COMMISSION

Kangaroos crossing: a familiar sight for Bruce on his Aussie travels

first published in 1995. The new edition will be available from July. And he is working on an *Easy Access Australia* website. With the Sydney Olympic and Paralympic Games looming, his guides could be handy.

In the last few months, Bruce has travelled 15,000km on his own in Australia. He also contributes to Lonely Planet's guides to Australia. He is the only Lonely Planet writer who uses a wheelchair.

But it is not all travel. He enjoys fishing with his nephews and is currently training for a scuba diving qualification. Bruce Cameron just can't keep away from the great outdoors.

And his work is making it a lot easier for disabled people to encounter the outback rather than setbacks.

Win!

Bruce Cameron's Tuscany tale is told in *Lonely Planet*

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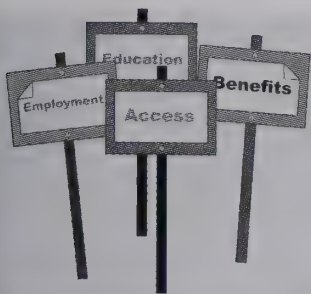
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Progress in community care

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although in reality this does not often happen.

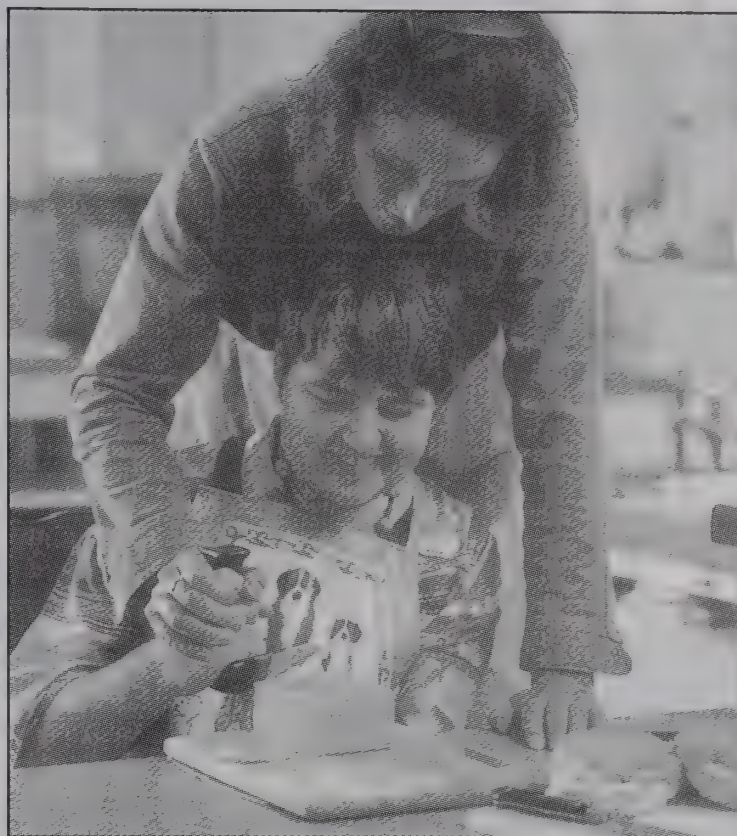
In any event, a reassessment must take place if there has been a change in circumstances, for example, if needs for physical assistance have increased.

If a reassessment or review identifies changed needs, the care package should be tailored to accommodate the changes. Local authorities must never withdraw services meeting an assessed need unless there has been a reassessment or review which can adjust the withdrawal.

Apart from stating that they must be needs led, the CCA does not prescribe how assessments should take place. Sometimes people are assessed over the phone and sometimes by post, but they are usually conducted in an assessment meeting.

People with complex needs may find that they are assessed via a series of meetings. When a person has community care needs which include, for example, health and housing, a multi-disciplinary assessment should take place involving staff from the various agencies.

A classic cause of conflict between those being assessed and those doing the assessing (ie the local authority) is different perceptions of need. A dis-



Helping hand: an assistant may be part of the care package provided

abled person may decide that they need 24-hour personal assistance seven days a week to be able to live an independent life, but the assessor may decide that 12 hours a day is sufficient.

The conflict arises because of the balancing act required of local authorities by the CCA: assessments must take into account the wishes and opin-

ions of the person being assessed, but local authorities also have a duty to use resources in a cost-effective way.

Local authorities must produce their own eligibility criteria by which they judge who will be entitled to what community care services.

The eligibility criteria must be applied to each assessment. This means local authorities

will provide services to the people whose community care needs are the greatest and most urgent. However, local authorities cannot decide not to provide a service to meet an assessed need merely because of its financial cost.

Since 1990 two separate acts have come into force, which impact on community care and independent living.

They are the Carers (Recognition and Services) Act 1995 and the Community Care (Direct Payments) Act 1996.

The Carers Act gives unpaid carers, usually family members, the right to their own assessment of need, although there is no duty on a local authority to meet a carer's assessed needs.

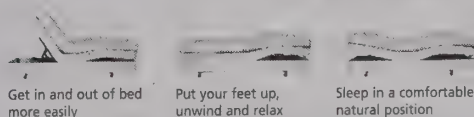
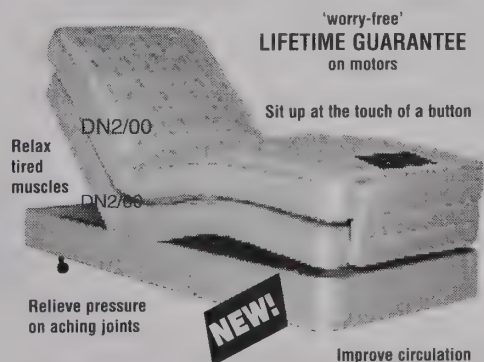
The Direct Payments Act enables disabled people to receive payments for services, in accordance with their assessed needs, to allow them to purchase care directly.

Both these pieces of legislation were implemented as a direct result of lobbying by the disability and carers' movement and both represent progress in the development of community care rights.

David Ruebain specialises in education and disability law at David Levene & Co Solicitors, tel: 0208 881 7777, minicom: 0208 881 6764.

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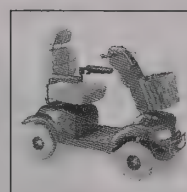
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Nancy Williams, who has "young-onset" Parkinson's disease, urges people to be more upfront about the condition

Out of hiding

When my father was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in the early '50s, we just accepted his shaking and shuffling progressively worsening. Unfortunately, he died, aged 65, just before the "miracle" drug Levodopa appeared.

Medication had become more sophisticated when I was

'Symptoms are frequently interpreted as the movements of someone who has had "one too many"'

diagnosed in 1987, aged 43, with "young-onset" Parkinson's. But, though the medical profession was busy experimenting with lesions and transplants, many of the day-to-day implications of living with Parkinson's were still shrouded in mystery.

After about six years, my drugs became less effective, and cramp and involuntary jerky movements added to my difficulties. These side effects of the drug, mistakenly regarded as symptoms of Parkinson's, often cause worse problems than the underlying disease. As a final humiliating insult, they are all too frequently interpreted as the movements of someone who has had "one too many".

My life is divided into times when I am "turned off" or "turned on". When "off", I have a severe tremor, am slow at initiating movements and I feel encased in cement. When "on", I'm superwoman and anything seems possible. I might go like a train but cannot always find the brakes. Not surprisingly, things frequently go wrong, as the drugs seem to have a mind of their own and are often reluctant to kick in.

Shortly after my diagnosis, YAPP&Rs (Young Alert Parkinson's Partners and Relatives) was started as an offshoot of the Parkinson's Disease Society. It was such a relief to find that there were other people of my age who spoke the same language.

Parkinson's is still thought of as a condition that affects the elderly. In fact, of the 10,000 people newly diagnosed each year, on average 2,000 are aged 40 or younger. The double image of a shaking pensioner inside the body of a young person does not fit and is frequently misunderstood.

I know only too well how it feels to stand at the checkout with an impatient queue behind, shaking so much that you cannot get your money

'Many people try to hide their symptoms, and, when that's no longer possible, start shunning social contact'

out, or appearing glum when everyone is laughing because your facial muscles are frozen. Many people try to hide their symptoms, and, when that's no longer possible, start shunning social contact.

But staying at home leads to depression and is not going to help. I think the only way to keep your confidence is, on the contrary, to be more upfront. I would like to see more people with Parkinson's come out of hiding – as Mohammed Ali, BBC Sportsman of the Millennium, did – so we can shake off this false image. To find out more about YAPP&Rs, contact Emma Bennion, tel: 01485 578592, e-mail: bennion@paston.co.uk

Happier days

Minister for Disabled People Margaret Hodge says new legislation signals an end to '50s-style treatment of pupils and students

School days were once thought to be the happiest in a child's life. That didn't always apply, though, and certainly not for many disabled children.

Blind children forced to attend boarding school at the age of five, kids in wheelchairs unable to go to the same school as their best friends, and youngsters with more severe disabilities shunted into institutions for the rest of their lives.

We've moved a long way since the '50s but not nearly far enough.

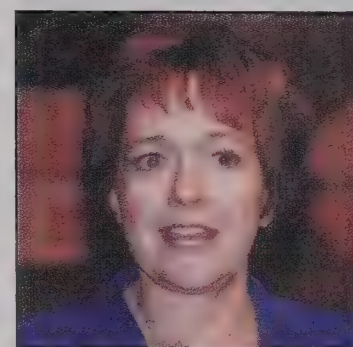
Recently I heard of a young actress turned down for a part despite years of study, academic achievement and acting ability. One of my staff was refused the chance – only five years ago – to train as a teacher. Why? Both were partially sighted.

Cases such as these will soon be a thing of the past. No disabled child, student or adult should ever again be excluded from the best that education can offer or from the choices and opportunities that have long been taken for granted by others.

That is why we are introducing new legislation to tackle discrimination in schools, colleges, and further, higher and adult education. Not only that. We're giving local authorities a £30m cash boost to help them open up their schools. We are taking forward the Disability Rights Task Force recommendations on education, putting right another of the major flaws in the previous Government's 1995 Disability Discrimination Act.

But it's not just a question of providing a ramp or handrails. Schools and colleges will have a duty to make reasonable changes to their policies and practices so that their disabled pupils and students are not disadvantaged.

A diabetic child with special dietary needs might find it easier to eat in class. If queueing



is a feature of school meals, it would be easy to serve a child with mobility problems at the table. A new colour scheme could make all the difference to a visually impaired child. Induction loops are simple and cheap. Lecturers could use microphones and provide a summary of their notes in large print. Computer equipment could be moved to the ground floor for a student with mobility difficulties.

Under the new legislation, schools and local education

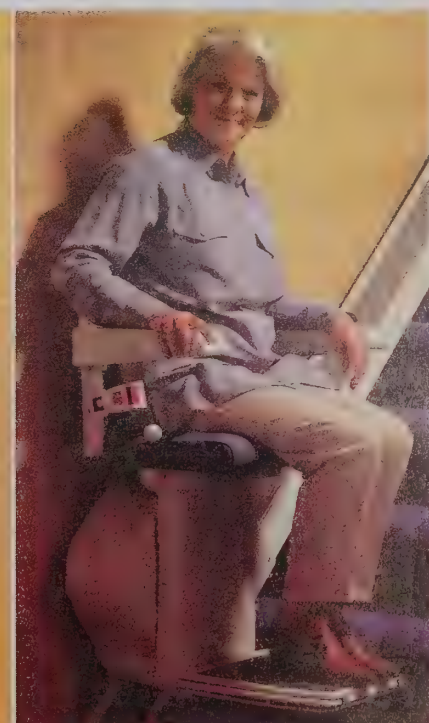
authorities will be required to make plans for accessibility not just to their premises but also to the curriculum. A disabled child should no longer be excluded from going on field trips or other educational visits.

But change will not happen overnight. The Task Force recognised that 24,000 schools and the many universities we have could not become instantly accessible. That is why we will want authorities to plan strategically so that schools and colleges can between them offer an equal opportunity to disabled children and students.

These proposals will bring to an end to the discrimination experienced by many disabled children and students in their education and training. It may not transform school into the happiest days for every child, but it will end the nightmare of unfair treatment.

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Holiday standards matter

Recent correspondence (*DN*, November, December) about inspection standards for tourist accommodation highlights the problems mainstream hotels have in catering for disabled people with varied needs.

However, I am not convinced that having no standards, as Ms Edwards advocates, is the answer.

My charity, working with the tourist boards, inspects accommodation against national standards drawn up in

consultation with disability groups and the tourist industry. While not perfect (given the variety of needs), these standards still enable us to gather data about the accessibility of places which we can pass on to disabled enquirers or use when booking accommodation for them through our reservation service (tel: 01293 773716).

David Phillips
 Chief executive
 Holiday Care
 Horley, Surrey

DLA trauma

I was disgusted to read of Jane Hind's problem with her Disability Living Allowance (*DN*, January).

I had a similar problem with my disability allowances. I only received the high rate for two years on renewal, regardless of the fact that my doctor had said my medical problem had deteriorated rapidly.

I put in an appeal and was told by someone at the DLA that they do not look at the latest report on the renewal

form, but only go by previous reports that the doctors do.

I strongly advise Jane to fight against this decision.
Lynne Bagnall
 Wilmslow, Cheshire

Pleased with offer

Due to my disability I am unable to sit and have been lying on our settee during the day. The Jools International sofa bean bag I won through *DN* supports my body much better and I am able to lie on my side more comfortably now.
Gaener O'Connor, St Albans

Genetic research and principles

Can I correct some of the inaccuracies in the letter from Dorothy Mallon and Lucy Wilkinson (*DN*, January)?

1. I am not employed by the International Centre for Life, but by the University of Newcastle. I have never taken money from pharmaceutical companies or "those threatening to eliminate some of us".
2. I work closely with disabled activists and feminists in Britain and the United States. I also work with many grass-roots disabled people's organisations which are prepared to engage critically and constructively with the challenge of genetics. Last year that included audiences in Belfast, Birmingham, Norfolk and Edinburgh as well as Newcastle. Disabled people have been involved in my project from the start.
3. I am happy to explain my position to anybody who takes the trouble to ask me about it, rather than denouncing me on the basis of an inaccurate understanding. The implications of genetics are complex, which is why slogans are rarely adequate responses. Unless you are completely opposed to

abortion, you have to develop a position which can reconcile disability rights with reproductive choice.

My friends and colleagues seem to respect my views, which cannot be described as naive, and we continue to debate genetics so as to develop a better understanding and critique. Those who would rather attack individuals than engage with the issues are neither friends of mine nor helping the cause of disability rights.

Dr Tom Shakespeare
 Gateshead

As a genetic patient, I totally agree with Tom Shakespeare and I'm happy that he is speaking the common sense of the vast majority of people affected by genetic disorders.

Lucy Wilkinson and Dorothy Mallon are confusing "getting rid of a genetic disease" with "getting rid of genetic patients". The former is supported by myself, Tom and the overwhelming majority; the latter is so preposterous it is only thought about by protesting extremists like the female duo.

Police don't all fail on deaf awareness

As a trainer in deaf awareness and registered deaf, I can assure readers that most (if not all) the counter staff of Kent police have been trained in deaf awareness. Moreover, all probationer officers, as they complete their two-year training,

receive a talk on deaf awareness and, as part of their practical assessment, they are faced with a situation which involves a deaf person – using deaf actors.
Lorraine Sencicle
 Hearing Concern
 London W3

Genetic research is, as it should be, overseen by countless ethics committees, to ensure that nothing immoral is conducted. I applaud Tom for leading one of the committees, where he can steer the direction of genetic research. A much more noble occupation than standing on the sidelines screaming and pasting protest slogans.
Andrew Blake, e-mail

Lucy Wilkinson and Dorothy Mallon accuse Tom Shakespeare and others of "ignoring the grassroot voices of the disabled people's movement".

What movement? Their views certainly would not represent those of most of the disabled people I have met or, I hope, most of your readers.

"We have a right to reject the elements of genetics which oppress us". What planet are these two ladies on? Planet "Future envy"? Many of us, who have probably lived quite a few years longer than your two correspondents, do not wish to force our disabilities upon future generations, just to keep the "crip" numbers up and disability culture alive.

Terry Hunt
 Mablethorpe, Lincs.

PC pulse

by Dan Batten

Short shrift

According to *The Guardian*, the big problem facing the panto industry at Xmas '99 wasn't anything to do with the millennium bug, but a lack of actors of short stature to play the roles of Snow White's cohorts. The piece wasn't exactly serious, but that doesn't excuse the insensitive headline: "Dwarfs are short this year". I suspect the journalist's deadline was too. More imagination please, *Guardian*. I expected better from you.

(Un) Social model

Also, alas, in *The Guardian's* weekend magazine in December was a characteristic attack on model agencies by Julie Burchill. Her line was that discrimination is the norm in the fashion industry and since it is all "utterly fantastic" we shouldn't be asking them to act "responsibly" and use a quota of black, fat, old or disabled models. Trouble is, Julie, that even if you see through the fashion industry, others don't. Fashion may not deserve much respect and influence but it gets it. So where does that leave us imperfect crips? On the outside, accepting?

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Designs on independence

Lynda Jordan transformed herself into a product designer so as to help her son feed himself

Fourteen years ago, my son Carl was born with cerebral palsy. From that day all our lives changed. The whole family began to focus on trying to help Carl through what seemed like very frustrating times, although Carl himself always seemed content.

We, the rest of the family, were the frustrated ones, watching Carl wanting to do more for himself than he could manage. Doctors told us to accept Carl's condition, but I felt that attitude would not help anyone, least of all Carl.

As Carl's mother, I felt it was up to me to do something about it and I have always striven to make Carl's life as independent as possible.

Four years ago, I sat feeding Carl as usual and thought that there must be a way for him to be able to feed himself.

With the help of Carl's imagination, we designed a spoon that he could hold. With a little assistance, Carl is able to hold a two-handed drinking cup, so we based the feeding concept on the same idea.

For months I tried drawing different designs and just couldn't get it right, until one day I took a piece of plastic pipe, two bike handle grips and a spoon. After many attempts I managed to bend the pipe and insert the spoon into the centre,



Girl power! Lynda (right) and sister Kim Stacey toast their invention

producing a two-handed implement.

The problem was that Carl's disability is such that his limbs work in mirror image, which means that his hands tend to pull together. I went back to the drawing board and finally came up with a solution. I made some safety straps to keep Carl's hands on the handles and away from the centre. They had to be quick-release, as he sometimes has seizures.

Three months ago, my sister Kim and I began to hunt for an investor. We found Dr Colin Draycott, who is now the third

partner in our venture. With his financial backing and dedication, we were able to get the prototype made and the final product manufactured.

On 8 November, my sister and I had the pleasure of watching Carl feed himself for the first time. It was an emotional moment for us all and the smile on Carl's face was a picture to treasure.

Designing this spoon has been an amazing experience and has given me so much

inspiration. We now have a company, SharCARE, which specialises in designing equipment for disabled people. Our products have already generated interest and we have had quite a number of orders.

tremors, offering support for anyone with weak limbs and providing guidance for people with visual impairments.

I now get on with the designing and Kim runs the business and marketing side of



Independence day: Carl is happy that he can now feed himself

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DN 02/00

In the second part of our three-month holiday special, *DN* travels to Canada and Tenerife. We also take a look at timeshare apartment schemes and, in particular, a timeshare exchange in Portugal

Timeshare tale

Timeshares can be a convenient holiday option, but are they always accessible? Pat Robins found out in the Algarve

Buying a timeshare holiday – where you buy a share in an apartment – continues to be quite popular. And in recent years new legislation has ensured that buyers are not exploited. But what about disabled owners? Are their needs catered for?

When my husband and I purchased our timeshare in 1997, the salesman was aware that I am disabled. I am deaf-blind and also have a balance problem. As I could not hear the presentation, the salesman arranged a quiet room where my husband could tell me about it before deciding whether to buy or not.

We were assured that all the timeshare venues are accessible and that I would experience no problems. We decided to take the plunge – you usually have to decide there and then as part of the deal. This can create problems, as there is no opportunity to check access.

We set off on our first timeshare holiday with our two sons. We had chosen to go to the Algarve area of Portugal, exchanging our own apartment in the Canary Islands.

We found that the Algarve



Positively blooming: Pat enjoys the wonderful Portuguese sunshine with husband Douglas

has a great deal to offer. The countryside is really attractive, with lots of colourful flowers and fruit growing everywhere. There are clean, sandy beaches to relax on and fishing villages where you can take boat trips.

We visited the Serra de Monchique mountain area, stopping at a spa to try the water. We liked the Moorish capital of Silves, especially the ancient cathedral and the ruins of the Moorish castle.

Our apartment was easy for

me to get round. However, it was not specially adapted in any way and a wheelchair could not have been used inside it.

Although the holiday village was pleasant, it was not easily accessible. There were steps with no rails, rough surfaces and lots of ledges to trip over. I had hoped to use the facilities at the leisure centre but was disappointed because the changing rooms were single sex. I had no one to guide me in the women's section, so I

could not go in. The sauna and jacuzzi were segregated, too.

When we expressed our surprise at the lack of facilities for disabled people, the manager claimed that special needs were catered for. He showed us a swimming pool where the front was open and a slope led down into the water. This, he said, allowed people in wheelchairs to go into the pool.

We had not planned to spend our time just in the village, so our trip was not spoiled. But

someone else's holiday might have been ruined.

I wrote to the company expressing my disappointment. I asked if brochures could not state what facilities there are for disabled people. The Kettering-based timeshare company, RCI, sent a reply suggesting that I was not the only disabled person to have had difficulties with timeshare, but indicating that they were trying to collate information about special needs facilities.

But they said that, with over 2,000 resorts affiliated to RCI, it could be difficult to record details of all facilities.

It is good to know something is being done for disabled owners, although it shouldn't be so hard to get details of facilities in this day and age. And only time will tell whether anything practical does get done to improve access.

For general information about timeshare holidays, contact the Organisation for Timeshare in Europe, tel: 0207 291 0901.

For details of timeshare exchange schemes, call RCI, tel: 01536 310111.

Portuguese National Tourist Office, tel: 0207 494 1441.

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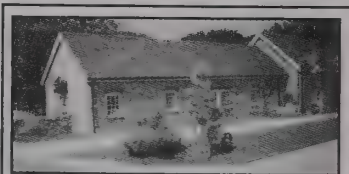
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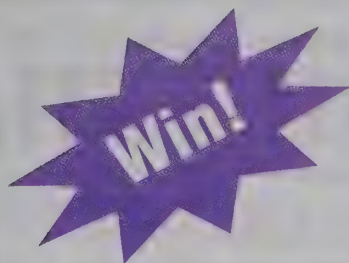
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Win a week away!

Fancy a holiday in Norfolk? Why not enter our competition to win a week, worth £350, at the fully accessible Berwick Cottage this April? Lin Berwick explains

The Lin Berwick Trust was formed out of a real sense of frustration at going on holiday to places that were supposed to be wheelchair-friendly – only to find they weren't.

A token ramp and a handrail in the bathroom meant accommodation was labelled as accessible. I was fed up with situations where access for people with disabilities was



Cottage guest Clare Thomas

paid lip service and I wanted to help matters.

The trust was founded in 1989 by me and my husband Ralph Boyce. We gathered around us a team of friends, each with their own expertise. It quickly became apparent that adapting an existing building



Take it easy: Clare Thomas (centre) and family enjoy the terrace

would be a poor substitute, so we decided to build our own.

In July 1997, after a great deal of hard work, the Lin Berwick Trust completed its first purpose-built, self-catering holiday accommodation in East Harling, Norfolk.

We were apprehensive about how the cottage would be received, but it was awarded grade 1 by Holiday Care and the East of England Tourist Board.

The cottage is extremely spacious. It has a Carter

overhead hoist and an Opel manual hoist, two Scan 700 beds, an adjustable sink, a toilet that washes and dries, a bath with a hoist seat, thermostatically controlled taps and a wheelchair shower. There is a Braille panel on the washing machine/dryer. There is a smoke alarm and vibrating alarm clock for people who are hearing impaired, and a talking microwave and a hob at wheelchair level. The garden has been designed to meet the

needs of physically disabled and visually impaired visitors.

The cottage sleeps up to six people, two with disabilities downstairs and four people upstairs in the two spacious bedrooms. There is also an upstairs bathroom.

The cottage is in a lovely, quiet location with easy access to places of interest in Norfolk. The village has every amenity needed for a week's holiday.

Our guests range from families where one or more members have a disability to visitors from residential establishments who come with their carers.

Why not enter this draw for a free week at the cottage and sample its facilities for

yourself? The winner will get free accommodation (all heating and bills included). All you need to do is get to the cottage and provide your own food, bedlinen and towels.

The only condition the trust imposes is that one of your party must have a disability. We do not state what that disability is or its severity, but Berwick Cottage is geared for the needs of severely disabled people.

Berwick Cottage has been so popular that we are now raising funds for two more properties. *If you don't win but still want to stay at the cottage, booking forms can be obtained from Mr WGH Tickner, 25 Webbscroft Road, Dagenham RM10 7NL, tel: 0208 595 7056.*

How to enter

The draw is for a stay at Berwick Cottage from 8 to 15 April 2000. Send your name, address and telephone number on a card marked "cottage" to DN at the address on page 2. State if you do not want your details to be given to the Lin Berwick Trust. Terms and conditions: entries must arrive at DN by February 29; entrants must be over 18; no proof of purchase required; UK entrants only; no cash alternatives; DN reserves the right to use winners for future publicity; the editor's decision is final; competition not open to staff or associates of DN or the Lin Berwick Trust; party must include at least one disabled person.

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Vicki Williams' family had a good time in Tenerife – although some of the travel arrangements proved a bit of a problem

Tenerife in a wheelchair

My Mum Bessie has only recently started using a wheelchair. At 83, she's fairly independent, living in her own home.

However, arthritis, asthma and heart problems keep her largely confined to her house and when she is out her wheelchair is essential. So, when she decided that it was time she had a holiday abroad, the wheelchair had to come too.

A holiday in Puerto de la Cruz, Tenerife, was duly booked, and on a hot August Friday, we set off for Manchester Airport.

The transfer from the car park to the airport went without a hitch, and the airport staff couldn't have been more helpful. Mum's wheelchair had been loaded on as luggage, so a porter was called to wheel her down the access corridor and straight on to the plane, avoiding the X-ray machine, which is a real no-no for anyone with a pacemaker.

Great so far, but we couldn't

get seats at the front with extra legroom, which was a bit of a problem for Mum. After a fairly uncomfortable flight, we arrived at Tenerife Airport. A porter took us to the baggage point, cheerfully chatting away in Spanish while we chatted back happily in English. Okay so far.

Our cases came through on the carousel, and so did everyone else's. Mum's wheelchair didn't. We waited and waited, expecting it any second, until finally we realised we were the only ones still there. Fears of missing the connecting bus to take us to our resort 60 miles away began to nag. I had to do something.

Frantically, I flipped through my phrase book, praying that the Spanish for wheelchair would be in there.

I spotted a booth with a question mark sign above it – it had to be the information kiosk. I ran to it and ventured in halting Spanish: "Please, the wheelchair of my mother?"

I followed this with a plaintive shrug and a pleading look.

The girl looked at me blankly for a moment. Then she

it all back together, loaded Mum into it and raced off to find the bus, which had actually waited for us.

The week's holiday was lovely – hotel, food, resort and attractions were all great. Locals and hotel staff were

Wales saved Mum from the dangers of the X-ray machine.

You live and learn. Next time, we'll make absolutely sure that everyone knows one of our party is in a wheelchair, and I am definitely going to learn some more Spanish.



Terrific Tenerife: Bessie with Vicki's husband Trefor in one of the flowery Puerto de la Cruz streets

whipped out a radio and started talking. The words "la silla de ruedas" (wheelchair) are etched on my memory for ever.

The carousel started moving again and one of the wheelchair's side panels appeared. Several agonising minutes later the remainder followed. We put

happy to help an elderly lady looking like the last outpost of the British Empire in her wide-brimmed straw hat.

We had no more problems until the return journey. This time only a hastily scribbled note written by a Spanish friend of ours at home in

Lunn Poly quotes £554 per person for seven nights half-board at the Tenerife Playa Hotel in Puerto de la Cruz, departing from Manchester Airport in August. The price is based on two people sharing. For more information, tel: 0870 333 4400.

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Ain't no mountain

Christine and Michelle Yates will never forget their whistle-stop tour of Canada. Now they're raring to go to North America again

As a mother and carer, I have always tried to ensure that my daughter Michelle doesn't miss out on things simply because of her disabilities: she has spina bifida, triplegia and epilepsy. Holidays are crucial to us, a chance to get away and forget routines. Last year we went on a coach tour to Canada, to celebrate my 50th birthday. We flew to Toronto and straight away to the wonderful Niagara Falls.

linked by a funicular railway.

On to Montreal. We visited the Olympic stadium, going in a cable car to the top of the world's tallest inclined tower. Then we visited Montreal Botanic Gardens, which, I confess, was more of a treat for me than for Michelle.

At Calgary we went up Sulphur Mountain on a

way down I risked keeping my eyes open and found my fears had disappeared.

The next day we went on a 45-minute helicopter ride over the Rockies, sometimes flying so close to the mountains that I thought we would hit them.

On our way to Jasper we stopped at the Athabasca Glacier where there was a chance for a snow coach ride on the Columbia Icefield. Unfortunately, it was too slippery for Michelle to risk going on to the ice, but she could see how beautiful it was.

On the road to Jasper we saw a bear with two cubs by the roadside, so, of course, the coach stopped for photos. By the next day, as we moved on to Kamloops, we were getting quite blasé about the stunning scenery, and the bears we saw now got just a passing glance.

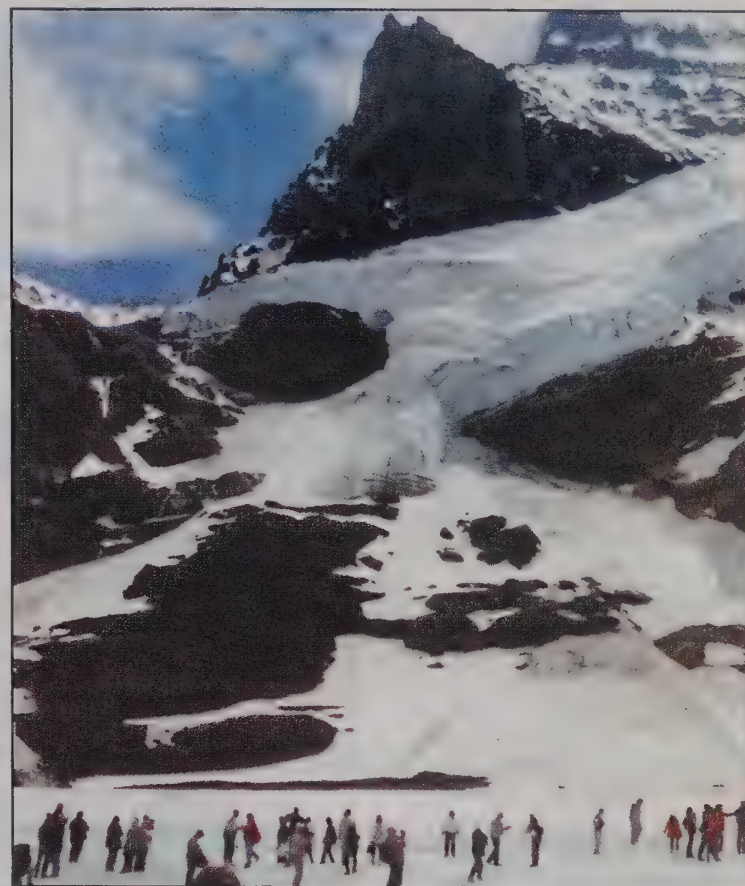
Our journey took us on to Vancouver Island. We got the ferry to the island after a stop at Chemainus, which has beautiful murals painted on the walls all over town. A gondola took us up Grouse Mountain (eyes open this time) for a meal and a lumberjack show.



Michelle at the lumberjack show on Grouse Mountain

The country was in the middle of a grave, with temperatures of up to 40°C. It was very hot, especially when we went on to Quebec, where we walked through the old and new cities, which are

gondola, me with my eyes shut as I was terrified. Michelle told me when we had reached the top and I opened my eyes. The views were wonderful. On the



Dizzy heights: the Columbia Icefield at the Athabasca Glacier

This was a fantastic holiday and one we will never forget. I had to carry Michelle on and off the coach as the driver was not allowed to help, but this was okay as I am quite fit and Michelle is light. We stayed in the same rooms as everyone else and had no problems.

This holiday was arranged by Archers, which is part of the Cosmos group. I later tried to book one with Jetsave to Colorado and Wyoming, but

they refused to accept us even though they knew we had been on coach tours already. They said it would be too strenuous for me. How do they know what is too strenuous for me? I have now booked a tour across the USA with Cosmos in September and we can't wait. Archers is offering 17-day Transcanada Explorer coach tours from £1,095 in 2000. For more information, tel: 0870 751 2000.

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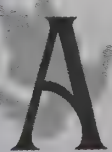
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With Valentine's Day just round the corner, *DN* takes a look at dating, sex aids and abusive relationships

Searching, looking for love

When Rebecca Shtasel finally started to recover from ME, she decided to take the plunge and try dating again. Sometimes she found herself asking whether it wouldn't be easier just to resign herself to being single

Having myalgic encephalitis (ME) and dating are seemingly incompatible activities.

When your body feels exhausted, your head is pounding and your glands are sore, the last thing you want to do is go to a party, flirt and, let's face it, have sex.

I became ill seven years ago at the age of 26. I gave up my job, my flat and my social life and moved back home to be looked after by my parents.

I felt so tired that even my bones ached with fatigue. My brain felt completely vacant. I often could not answer even the simplest questions and, besides, I did not have the energy to speak. I could not bear anyone to be near me – it was just too exhausting.

The nearest I came to romance was watching *Blind Date* every Saturday night.

After a few months at home, I began what has been a long recovery. Although being with people was too tiring, I found I was able to talk on the phone.

A friend introduced me to a fellow member of the local ME support group who was also housebound and we began a



We two are one: illness meant Rebecca and Andy had to take their time, but they are now living together

phone relationship.

We must have met in person only a couple of times, but we talked for hours every week and sent each other cards and presents. It felt like a relationship, yet not like one from my pre-illness days. It was intense and when it ended it felt like the end of an affair not a simple friendship. I had discovered that illness is no

barrier to love; there are just different ways of finding it.

After a couple of years at home, I felt well enough to move. By coincidence, one of my new flatmates also had ME. He was keen to advertise in a lonely hearts column. I joined in but found that when I had several replies, I had no interest. I was enjoying my newly won bit of energy too

much to waste it chatting with strangers. I wanted it all for me and it felt good to be selfish.

A year on and I was used to having some strength. I felt ready to try dating again. I didn't want anything heavy, just some fun. However, it's difficult to meet people when your energy drops in the evenings, you have an alcohol intolerance (a common symptom of ME)

and your main social activity is having afternoon tea.

My friend Liz, who had the same problems meeting men, came up with a plan: we should swap male friends. She got my friend Jonathan and I began a correspondence with Colin. This ended in him inviting himself to stay – for three days.

I would never have contemplated a three-day blind date when well, let alone while chronically ill. I decided to ignore the alcohol intolerance: I could not possibly cope with this sober.

Unfortunately, the alcohol intolerance did not ignore me.

'When your body feels exhausted, the last thing you want to do is go to a party, flirt and, let's face it, have sex'

After a nerve-wracking day showing Colin round Brighton, I hit the bottle and spent the next two days with my head over a toilet bowl.

I decided to call a halt to my attempts at dating. I had loved and lost already in my 32 years and maybe that was enough. I would spend the rest of my life single and it would be good. I had spent so much time on my own while ill that being alone held no terrors for me.

However, that old adage – that when you stop looking, someone comes along – came true for me. I had known Andy vaguely for a couple of years, but he had been ill too (with Crohn's disease) and so we had never really become fully acquainted.

It was when he was recovering from an operation that we finally became friends. Both being chronically ill drew us together, but we soon realised that we clicked on lots of other levels too.

I was not sure if my health was up to a serious relationship and later I discovered that Andy had similar worries about his health. So we took our time but eventually got it together.

A year later, we are living together. Our health has not suffered and we are very happy.

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Bringing care to the community

Mat Fraser has some dating advice – if you want to find the right partner, find yourself first

It was just after my thirteenth birthday. My gang, which was a couple of strange lads, three “weeds” and me, the only disabled kid in an all-male school, had arranged a mass date with some girls from another school.

Within minutes, the pairing began and soon there were several snogging couples, me and the very nervous, polite and acutely embarrassed Vicky. Her look of determination overcoming revulsion convinced me something was wrong.

I managed to snog at my friend's party, the lights turned out and the very game Beverley

‘The lights come on and I can't get my hand out of her bra quickly’

allowing me into her junior bra. Suddenly the lights are on and I can't get my hand out quickly. Beverley is looking like she's been betrayed and I'm thinking “Was she put up to this by my mate's sisters?” She was.

When punk came along, I embraced it and found a new type of girl: the alternative female. I facilitated some personal rebellions and gained a sex life, though always in a private, darkened room.

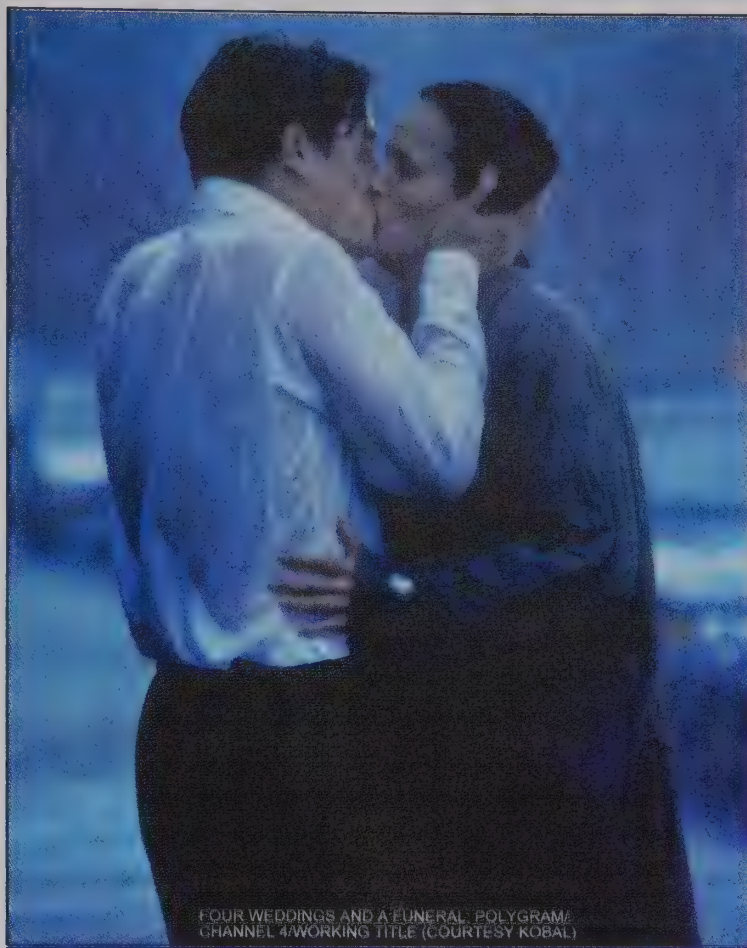
I look back on those girls as revolutionaries now. I had sussed out that only girls who could reject the confinements of society's values would reject the negativity of disability and find the person inside.

When I got rid of my dreadlocks in '96, I was deciding no longer to rely on alternative cool for my identity. All my previous adult life it had served as an escape mechanism from disability.

To this day, it is the free-thinking, alternative types who tend to go for me from the non-disabled community.

Going back a bit, how did I view disabled girls? I'd had a fair bit of sex on my thalidomide group holidays, but bringing a disabled girl into my social scene would have meant underlining my disability and I was in denial, big time.

The dating game



FOUR WEDDINGS AND A FUNERAL: POLYGRAM/CHANNEL 4/WORKING TITLE (COURTESY KOBAL)

No way would Tanni Grey-Thompson swap married life for singledom

What is there to say about relationships apart from OH NO!

They can be the most painful things ever, and that is when they are going okay. It doesn't begin to explain the feeling of getting dumped, trying to dump someone else and all the other nasty things.

As a teenager, I had no hang-ups about boyfriends, mostly because I was a tomboy and none of my friends had them.

I remember the first crush I had, being asked out and then finding out I didn't really like him anyway. It took eight months to end it – I didn't want to hurt his feelings.

What I used to hate was the chatting up. I wouldn't notice if I was being chatted up and didn't like most of the guys that fancied me. And, while all that new stuff can be really exciting, disability was an issue. It wasn't the fact that I was disabled, but having to teach someone how to put my chair in the car, what steps I can get up on my own, etc. And the worst thing is how you snog someone who seems

to be 14 feet taller than you.

There is no easy answer. If you want to snog them you basically have to say “Oi, come here”. Or if they decide to kiss you, there's the problem of how they get low enough without giving you time to change your mind.

One of the funniest things that happened to me in my dating days was meeting a new boyfriend's parents.

When they opened the door, they looked at the height they thought I should be at and saw nothing. As if in slow motion, their heads dropped and, while they didn't quite step back when they saw me in my wheelchair, there was an intake of breath. You need to keep your sense of humour sometimes.

My advice is that first impressions are important: if you hate someone on sight, that's probably how it will end up. And give out your mobile not your home phone number – that way, if they pester you or you want to play it cool, you can ignore them.

Now that I am married I can forget having to make an effort with all that hair and make-up stuff. The best bit about being in a steady relationship is that your partner is meant to love you when you look your worst, ie when you are yourself.

It is all worth it in the end, but would I swap my life now with that of my teenage self? Not a chance.

Tanni Grey-Thompson OBE is a Paralympic gold medallist.

Organisations that could help you get some romance in your life:

Disabled Professional Partners, tel: 0117 962 8593.

Find-A-Friend, tel: 01606 49093.

Gay and Lesbian Switchboard, tel: 0207 837 7324.

Handidate is a friendship agency with a nationwide database: Freepost, The Wellington Centre, 52 Chevallier Street, Ipswich IP1 2BR, tel: 01473 226950.

Outsiders helps disabled people find partners nationwide, PO Box 4ZB, London W1A 4ZB, tel: 0207 460 2244.

Regard is a gay and lesbian group: tel: 0207 688 4111.

As I achieved self-awareness, I saw disabled women as they are and how I wanted to be seen by others – whole and beautiful within their disability.

Meanwhile, if it wasn't non-disabled girls, it was fetish clubs – weirdest bloke there so I got a high score – but they were ultimately soul-destroying.

Most of my adult life has been in quite long, loving relationships, where the woman in question was a good friend first, and for me these are the very best kind of relationships.

The dating game can be played by disabled people in mainstream society, but it is like a very complicated video game. You have to decide which player you are and which games to play, and there's the danger of serious injury.

Of course, the biggest difference between people in relationships is whether they're straight, gay or bisexual.

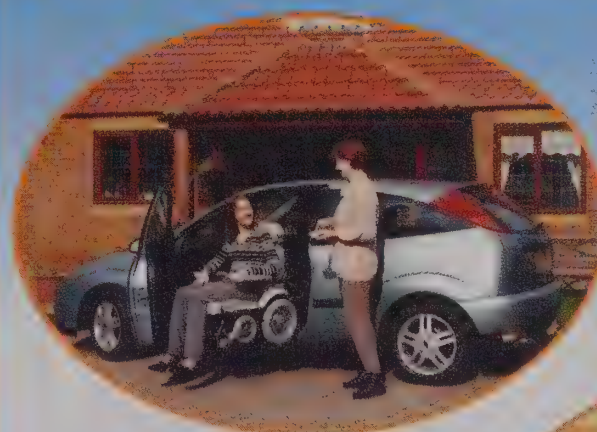
It helps if you are sure of your identity. Depending on whether you want fun or something deeper, adjust your attitude.

And be honest with yourself. That is a better basis for success than self-denial, I think.

Mat Fraser is an actor, musician and broadcaster.

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Let's talk about sex, baby

Revitalise your sex life with some of the best physical and mental aids around. Dan Batten investigates

It is a sad fact that Victorian attitudes towards sex aids still prevail. Mention a vibrator to most people and you'll get an awkward response. But for many disabled people sex aids are both welcome and necessary.

However, there's more to sex aids than rubber. Few realise the potency of a whispered word, a massage or a special song. So, get in the mood for lurve with DN's guide to physical, mental and emotional aids.

Many people are put off buying sex aids because they feel uneasy going into a sex shop. Britain may still have some way to go before it is as enlightened as other European countries, but these days seedy Soho shops are no longer the only place to buy.

One source is the SexWare catalogue from the Family Planning Association trading arm, FP Sales. Sarah Bowler, chief executive of counselling



Good vibrations: sales assistant Jo Marshall shows Dan Batten her wares at Sh!, a London sex aids shop

organisation Relate, describes it as "factual and without the hype which typifies much of the literature available to the public".

Another non-intimidating outlet is the London shop Sh! (pronounced "shush"). Run by and for women, it has a relaxed and non-judgemental atmosphere. It offers mail order and telephone advice and the catalogue is fun without being

smutty. Men are only allowed into Sh! accompanied by a "responsible" woman. Staff member Jo Marshall wishes more people would feel comfortable with sex aids.

"They have lots to offer everyone, including disabled people," she says.

Another source of information is the Association to Aid the Sexual and Personal

Relationships of People with a Disability (SPOD), which offers counselling, an information phone line and leaflets on the sex problems faced by people with various disabilities.

Ordering online is also an option. Ann Summers has a website where you can buy anything you would find in the Ann Summers shops. The site is unsensational and lets you pick what you want from the

hands-free version is available with a harness you wear round your waist. Prices start at around £30.

Erection problems, widely experienced by men with multiple sclerosis, may mean penetrative sex is not possible. If so, a false penis is ideal. These strap around the waist and can be solid or hollow to allow the flaccid penis to fit inside. They must be used with a lubricant to prevent pain to your partner.

Erection problems can also be eased by an energising ring. These sit behind the penis, giving out a charge of static electricity to stimulate the blood vessels used to gain an erection. They are made to measure.

If penetration is painful for a woman, then a false vagina could be the answer.

All these physical aids can help solve problems, but some of the best ways to spice up your love life are not mechanical.

One of the most important things is to create the right mood. Sex shouldn't be a mad dash and many people get so uptight that they forget sex is a pleasure which takes many forms.

Why not burn a sweet smelling candle or massage your other half with a luxurious oil? As long as no

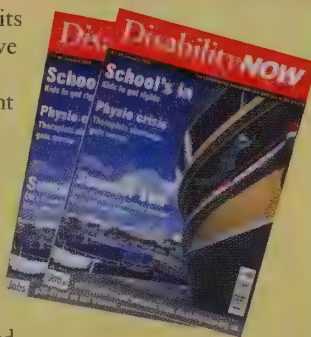
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6 copies £130, 7 copies £150, 8 copies £172, 9 copies £195,
10-50 copies £220, 51-100 copies £250, 101-150 copies £285.

Factfile

SPOD, 286 Camden Road, London N7 0BJ, tel: 0207 607 8851.
The confidential help and information line is open 10.30am-1.30pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and 1.30pm-4.30pm on Wednesdays.

For a SexWare catalogue write to FP Sales, PO Box 883, Mail Order Department, Oxford OX4 5NT.

Sh!, 39 Coronet Street, London N1, tel: 0207 613 5458. Open 11.30am-6.30pm Monday-Saturday, with late-night opening until 8pm on Thursdays.

Useful websites: www.annsummers.com

www.marketplace.co.uk/magic; www.youtopia.ltd.uk

comfort of your armchair.

Be warned, though: there are many web sex sharks out there!

When it comes to choosing the right aid, the wide choice can be daunting. A good place to start is the vibrator.

Shaped like a penis and powered by batteries, they come in various widths, materials and colours. Although predominately used by women, they can also be used by men.

The vibrator is useful for people who are not in a sexual relationship and those with erection problems. Prices start at around £18 in the Sh! catalogue.

For those with co-ordination problems, such as people with cerebral palsy, a

one comes to any harm, why place limits on what you do?

Another of the most successful sex aids is a sense of humour. Lots of people freeze with fear at the vital moment – why not use laughter to calm your nerves?

We Brits may be a reserved lot on the whole, but sex is never better than when you and your partner trust each other enough to say exactly what you feel.

You could use the best sex aid of all here: look deep into your partner's eyes and tell them that you love them.

Whatever you use, sex should be enjoyable. And if things go wrong, you can always try again. That's half the fun!

- One woman is killed every three days by a violent partner or ex-partner (Criminal Statistics, Home Office, 1995).
- Domestic violence accounts for a quarter of all violent crime (British Crime Survey, 1998).
- 12 per cent of disabled women have been assaulted by their partners, compared to 7.8 per cent of non-disabled women (British Crime Survey, 1999).
- 100 years ago it was legal for a man to beat his wife as long as he used a stick no thicker than his thumb.

Falling in love is a wonderful experience and when it happens most of us can't wait to shout about it from the roof tops.

But when things go wrong, it's a different matter. All too often a loving partner can become an abuser and speaking out about violent or abusive relationships is difficult. Despite recent improvements in attitudes and resources, all the evidence suggests that there are still far too many people suffering in silence.

The majority of these silent people are women. According to the Government's British Crime Survey 1998, one woman in four experiences domestic violence at some stage in her life – and it seems that disabled women are at even higher risk.

Surveys conducted by the Berkeley Planning Associates in the USA found that 98 to 99 per cent of 200 disabled women had endured some kind of abuse or violence, very often at the hands

'The stereotype view of disabled women is that they are not sexual and, if they are in a relationship, they should be grateful'

of the person on whom they were most dependent.

To begin to highlight adult abuse Scope is running a conference, *Adult Protection and Disability: Equality, Rights, Protection*, on 1 March in London. Conference speaker Jane Bethell is a project development worker in Disabled Women's Services at the Leeds Inter-Agency Project. She welcomes attention being drawn to an issue which she believes has been sorely overlooked.

"It's a can of worms because of people's attitudes towards disability," she says. "The stereotype view of disabled women is that they are not sexual and, if they are in a relationship, they should be grateful. Also, people can't quite believe that someone would be violent towards a disabled person."

Ms Bethell, who is disabled herself, has been working for ten years with women who have experienced violence. At times, she admits, her job has

been harrowing.

"Abuse can be anything – physical, sexual or psychological. People's impairments are used as a way of abusing. The scenario is 'You're lucky to have me'. Women have been denied food and medication. Nearly every woman in the groups I work with has experienced violence."

Why are disabled women at greater risk of abuse from their partners? Few statistics are available, but the answer hinges on power and dependence, according to researcher and activist Nasa Begum.

"Abuse is tightly linked into the power relationship and very often disabled people are in a much less powerful position," says Ms Begum. "The people who hold the power are normally those who abuse the most; so it's much more likely to happen to people in relationships with non-disabled people."

Campaign group Women with Visible and Invisible Disabilities (WinVisible) is about to publish a new book which looks at violence against disabled people, *Disability and Violence – the Cash Connection*. WinVisible's Claire Glasman agrees that power is the key to abuse.

"Women with disabilities can be more financially dependent and are less physically able to defend

'Abuse is much more likely to happen to disabled people in relationships with non-disabled people'

themselves or leave. It's not just that there is a lack of refuges; if it has taken you years to get your home adapted, you're not going to leave just like that," she says.

Many women may stay with abusive partners because of fears about inadequate or inaccessible services and refuges. According to Melissa Blease, helpline co-ordinator at the Women's Aid Federation (WAF), 35 per cent of WAF's 300 refuges are accessible.

But Jane Bethell says there is still "room for huge improvement" in refuges and she also believes women may not know where to get help.

A quarter of women suffer domestic violence in their lives. And disabled women are most vulnerable, as Sally Brown finds out

Terms of abuse



CHATREX FEATURES LIMITED

Power problems: abuse is often linked to dependence

One group at particular risk of abuse is women who have learning difficulties.

London's Beverly Lewis House is the country's only refuge run by and for women with learning difficulties. It was set up ten years ago by the Powerhouse campaigning group.

Disturbing evidence recently emerged from the Barnardo's

Streets and Lanes project which works with children abused through prostitution in Bradford, West Yorkshire. Project workers have found that many of the young girls tricked into prostitution by their older "boyfriends" have learning difficulties.

Project worker Virginia Sheehy says: "The key issues are

vulnerability and dependency on adults, and these are exacerbated if a young woman has special needs."

There are signs that tackling domestic violence is being put higher up the political agenda with the publication of the Government's report *Living Without Fear – an Integrated Approach to Tackling Violence against Women* in 1999.

However, violence and abuse involving disabled women are still in desperate need of research and solutions.

Beverly Lewis House, tel: 0208 522 0675.

Careline (counselling on issues including family problems), tel: 0208 514 1177.

Powerhouse, tel: 0207 366 6336. Scope conference, tel: 01273 623222.

Women's Aid National Domestic Violence Helpline, tel: 0345 023 468.

Women's Aid National Office, tel: 0117 944 4411.

Refuges – you can be referred by the Samaritans, tel: 0345 909 090, social services, Citizens' Advice Bureaux, tel: 0207 833 2181, or the police. Or you can look in the phone book.

WinVisible, tel: 0207 482 2496.

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DN

An actor's life for me

Ben Furner is one of 12 wannabe actors on a pioneering, six-month training course. How has he been getting on?

The idea of being an actor has been a periodic dream throughout my life, fuelled by theatre-going, amateur dramatics and fantasies about Pierce Brosnan's bank account.

Still, I wasn't so sure that giving up a well-paid, secure career for a place on Graeae Theatre Company's lottery-funded Missing Piece course was my brightest idea. But would I really lie on my death bed saying "I wish I hadn't done that course?"

So I was sucked into a whirlwind of leaving my job (scary), renting out my house (a pain), finding digs in London (foul) and living with my parents at weekends. And, of course, having no money.

The Missing Piece was designed with great thought and care, a testimony to Graeae's commitment to seeing more disabled people working as actors.

Over the first three months, October to December 1999, our mornings were taken up either with voice or movement training. We learnt how to use our breath and body to improve the voice and control our tongue and mouth so as to speak more clearly and project better. We were taught to use our bodies more efficiently and create a presence on stage.

Afternoons were given over to work on three areas: young people's theatre – how to appeal to young theatre-goers



Stage presence: Ben (top, right) rehearsing *Message in a Bottle* with other Missing Piece actors

and skills like story telling; contemporary writers (we studied two plays); and Shakespeare. Exploring character in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with Jennie Buckman, head of drama at the

'My training colleagues were supportive, the tutors were superb and the new Sadler's Wells theatre was access paradise'

Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, was really inspirational. I loved it.

By week three, the twelve of us seemed to be getting on well as a group, but my initial ridicule of the timetable ("10am to 4.15pm? These people don't live in the real world") was a mistake – I was exhausted. It may have been the shock of such a change in lifestyle – job, home

and income had all disappeared in the space of ten days.

By week five I was almost punch-drunk with tiredness, desperate for the impending half-term, yet also aware that I had to take on the paid work I'd been offered to supplement my finances. Diary note: acting is very well paid for the few and very badly for the majority. Continue fantasy about Pierce Brosnan's bank account until further notice.

Over the half-term I brooded on my lack of energy. An actor's life is not for the faint-hearted. I also recognised the course was forcing me to question my motivation, to look at what makes me tick. So for me, it's been as much about personal development as about learning how to act.

After half-term, reality checks started coming thick and fast. My carefully planned budget was scattered to the winds. Visits to the theatre left

me in awe of some of the talent out there. My London friends complained because I didn't have time to visit them.

Yet my training colleagues were supportive, tutors were superb and our venue, the new Sadler's Wells theatre in central London, was access paradise.

The biggest low was the tiredness, but it was balanced by the soaring highs of learning new skills and the excitement of putting them into practice.

Now, here comes what the training has all been about. We've been split into two groups, and each group will be touring a show in February.

My disappointment at not being cast into my preferred play is tempered by the reality of an actor's life (it's paid work and not many actors get that), and a growing excitement with the one I am to be in.

When I told one of my work colleagues I was leaving, they said: "I suppose it's time there was a disabled character on *EastEnders*." They were right, of course.

The Missing Piece could be a key stepping stone for disabled actors, but it's a tough life and the competition is intense.

I'm not sure I'm ready to go for the mantle of landlord at the Queen Vic just yet – ask me after the tour.

Ben's play, *Message in a Bottle*, is for 8 to 11-year-olds. Besides visiting schools, it will have public performances at Wimbledon Studio Theatre, 5 February; Oval House, Kennington, 8-9 February; Half Moon Theatre, E1, 11-12 February; and RADA, Kennington, 23 February. Further information from Graeae, tel: 0207 267 1959, e-mail: graeae@dircon.co.uk

Book news

• Are you a parent juggling work and caring for a disabled child? Then *Waving not Drowning* could be for you. It gives practical advice, case studies, information on your child's rights and a list of useful organisations and publications £11.95 (£2.99 for parents of disabled children), Parents at Work, tel: 0207 628 3565.

• Bag Books are for people with profound learning disabilities. They come in the form of a pack of cards and a laminated story board so that pages can be looked at individually and together. The cards offer sounds, smells, textures and visual elements to stimulate the reader. £40 to organisations and £25 to parents, tel: 0207 385 4021.

• The *Gabbitas Guide to Schools for Special Needs* (5th edition) describes itself as the definitive guide to special needs education in the UK, giving advice on assessment procedures, a list of schools with special needs provision and lots of other useful information. Kogan Page, £14.99.

• *Wheelie Power* is free of charge to young people with spinal injuries. It covers all aspects of life for spinally injured children and teenagers and is illustrated by DN's very own cartoonist Steven Morgan. Spinal Injuries Association, £5 p&p for libraries and other organisations, tel: 0208 444 2121, ext 222, e-mail: sia@spinal.co.uk

• Andrea Whittaker's *Changing our Days* is a guide for people with learning disabilities on how to get more out of their day, find jobs, do courses and make friends. King's Fund, £12.99.

• *The Raging Quiet* by Sherryl Jordan is a teenage read. Marnie helps deaf boy Raven by inventing a signing system to communicate with him, but, in doing so, finds herself branded a witch by villagers. Simon and Schuster, £9.99.

• People with visual impairments no longer need to feel left out of the Harry Potter craze: audiobook company Cover to Cover is to publish *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, read by Stephen Fry. *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* is already available on tape. Cover to Cover, £19.99.

• *A Balanced Way of Living* by Vicki McKenna is her selection of strategies for coping with post-polio syndrome, a condition which includes chronic fatigue and concentration loss. Vicki McKenna, 42 Regent Park Square, Glasgow G41 2AG, £10.

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Television

Paul Darke

The millennium did not end well. The *Real Bionic Man* (C4, 13 December) was a pointless homily to bioengineering and the superiority of the "normal": micro-camera eyes, artificial limbs, thinking brains, etc, whilst *Liverpool Mums* (C5, 23 December) had expectant mothers worrying about having babies with Down's syndrome.

2000 Today (BBC1 31 December /1 January), the BBC's countdown to the millennium, was a bunch of sad presenters grateful for having survived into the 21st century. The celebration ignored disabled people.

A *Touch of Frost* (ITV, 1 January) had David Jason as Frost telling a bitter old wheelchair character what a cliché he was for letting his son die. Wheelchair user's fault, as usual.

What Katy Did (ITV, 2 January) was an uplifting drama starring Kevin Whately, made from Susan Coolridge's children's novel. Interesting, until the disabled Katy became "normal".

Horizon: Life and Death in the 21st Century – Designer Babies (BBC2, 6 January) was a virtual replica of a C5 series last year, only C5 included the voice of disabled people. This version was merely a hymn to the world of genetics. There were no deaths of disabled people, as promised in the title.

Second Sight (BBC1 9/16 January) with Clive Owens as a policeman investigating a murder would have been enjoyable except for the scenario of Owens going blind. "Touchy feely" is not the word for it.

That Peter Kay Thing (C4 12 January, Wednesday nights until the end of February) is a spoof documentary which has its moments, including many disabled characters. Recommended if you are not easily offended.

Look out for *From The Edge* (BBC2, February) and *The Slot* (after C4's evening news) which features films made on C4's production courses for disabled people.

Check out C4's disability resource database at www.fourall.org. Get yourself on it and you will almost certainly be used by C4 in the future.



THE NATIONAL GALLERY LONDON

Art

Marion Bull

The National Gallery's first sign-interpreted tour of the New Year appropriately featured paintings of the Virgin and Child. I had rarely looked at the Renaissance period with such interest, but Bridget Crowley's guided lecture kicked off with intrigue, looking at the *Wilton Diptych* (above), by a mystery artist of the English court.

With 20 or so people crowded round a guide, an interpreter and a small, double-panelled altar piece there is always the danger of the audience taking in the facts without actually looking at the painting. But the piece, showing King Richard II being presented to the Virgin and Child, is so fine and exquisite in detail – at first sight reminiscent of a Persian miniature – that everyone stayed to examine it closely. Both artist and exact date are

unknown, but the vibrant blue (lapis lazuli ground to a powder with classical egg yolk tempera base) leaps out of the frame with the same freshness it must have had six months after application when it dried, probably around 1395.

As we wandered from one gallery to another, the interpreter's job was made more difficult by having to know and finger-spell Italian names and words such as "sfumato", the shadowy, hazy technique used in Leonardo's *Virgin of the Rocks* with its superb luminescent skin tones. Those I spoke to agreed that the signed interpretation was

excellent. In particular, the interpreter managed to match the rapid pace of the speaker.

These popular free tours have had a small regular following since they started three years ago. But new people attend every month, and by the end of the tour, with a few curious onlookers and tourists tagging along, a near mob-scene gathers.

Go – but when the tour has ended go round and look again from a different perspective. *The National Gallery has lectures for deaf visitors on 5 February, 4 March, 1 April, 6 May and 3 June. They are free of charge. Tel: 0207 747 2424.*

Look out for

• The première of six short films made with money from New Perceptions – the bursary scheme to help disabled people make films – is at Curzon Soho Cinema, London, 18 February at 11am. Areas covered in the films include mental health, and HIV and AIDS. Contact Joan Greening, tel: 0208 741 1766.

• A signed performance of *Casper – The Musical* will take place at the Shaftesbury Theatre in London, 3 February at 7.30pm. Contact the box office, tel: 0207 379 5399.

• The Art House is a national organisation which aims to provide equal access to the visual arts for both disabled and non-disabled artists. Contact Liz Whitehouse, tel: 01422 342070.

• An audio-described performance of Alan Ayckbourn's comic study of suburban life, *Just Between Ourselves*, is on at the Northcott Theatre, Exeter, on 2 March. Call the box office, tel: 01392 493493.

• The talk *Degas: Hélène Rouart in her Father's Study* is part of the National Gallery's *Art Through Words* season for blind and visually impaired people. To book a free place, call the education department, tel: 0207 747 2424.

Video top 5

1. **ENTRAPMENT** (Fox Pathé): Sir Sean Connery in turgid thriller.
2. **THE MATRIX** (Warner): Head-spinning thriller with Keanu Reeves.
3. **NOTTING HILL** (Universal): Hugh and Julia still hanging out at the top.
4. **CRUEL INTENTIONS** (Columbia Tri-Star): *Dangerous Liaisons* remake with Sarah-Michelle Gellar.
5. **SHE'S ALL THAT** (FilmFour): Teen "comedy" to set your teeth on edge.

Chart supplied by MIRB.

❑ Closed captions included.

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RENAULT



The Peugeot Expert Combi may be a good-looking people carrier, but it still needs a bit of tweaking, says Doug Campbell

A roomy roadrunner



Open wide: loading a wheelchair is relatively easy and, once you're in, there's plenty of room

I road-tested the Hill Gruau conversion of the Peugeot Expert Combi from the rear – as a passenger sitting in my wheelchair. And in many ways I was pleasantly surprised.

The Combi comes originally from the Peugeot 806 multi-purpose vehicle (MPV). All the side windows have been fitted in the factory and they have not had to raise the roof. As a result, this vehicle really does look like one of the many MPVs seen every day.

Opening the rear doors automatically lowers the suspension, which takes just ten seconds. It is easy to unfold the ramp and it is then quite simple to push a wheelchair into the generous space.

There was not enough room for the wheelchair's clamping and seat belt, although the suppliers assure me that this problem is being overcome.

The wheelchair user faces forward in the centre of the car behind the rear seats. I found

the view to the sides and towards the front excellent, but I am quite short and was sitting in a small wheelchair. Taller users might find their view less good, but I doubt if this would be a real problem.

My main concern was that the section of floor on which the wheelchair stands slopes so that the back of the chair is lower than the front. I was not totally comfortable, but this was probably more due to the need for better clamping than

the actual slope.

The rear row of seats is served by large sliding doors. I have never been a great fan of sliding doors, but these seem to operate well. They certainly make lifting someone into the rear seats easier.

The version I saw had two single seats in the front row and a three-seat bench behind. Seating options mean the car can carry an occupied wheelchair and six adults.

We took the car out for a

good spin in narrow backstreets and on main roads. The rear air suspension gave a smooth ride and even the dreaded speed bumps were not too bad. The 1.9 litre turbo diesel engine had more than enough power and noise levels inside the car were very acceptable.

The price is competitive at around £19,000 (free of VAT). The Expert Combi will suit a family that needs to accommodate a wheelchair user and the rest of the family.

It should be available soon on Motability contract hire.

The car is around the same size as a family saloon, so it would be good around town. It comes with all the usual options we expect in cars today.

Full factory approval of the modifications and the availability of servicing through the Peugeot network should also make life easier.

A final warning: the Expert Combi may look good and it drives well, but remember that there is no point in getting a car that is not suitable. You could consult a Mobility Centre before making a decision.

Hill Gruau, 19 Stalybridge Road, Mottram in

Longdendale, Hyde, Cheshire SK14 6NE, tel: 01457 766777.

UK Forum of Mobility Centres, c/o Cornwall Friends Mobility Centre, Tehidy House, Royal Cornwall Hospital, Truro, Cornwall TR1 3LJ, tel: 01872 254920, or visit their site at www.justmobility.co.uk/forum/index.htm

Douglas Campbell is executive director of the Disabled Drivers' Association.

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Contact Paul Cassidy or David Reid for brochures or a demonstration. Invatravel is a long established company with years of experience providing for the needs of people with disabilities.

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Your stars



By DN's astrologer Marion Stanton

AQUARIUS (21 Jan-19 Feb)
Your creative energy starts to flow in February. Believing in yourself and going for your goals could give long-term benefits.

PISCES (20 Feb-20 Mar)
People will listen, but chose the right topic to talk about. Don't get side tracked – you should be influencing big changes. A female friend may help you out.

ARIES (21 Mar-20 Apr)
That Arian fire comes into its own this month! You have the stage, so use it. A sister or mother could offer some wisdom. If you have an idea, check it and then try it out.

TAURUS (21 Apr-21 May)
Trust in luck and hard work this month. An unusually wild idea may just work, but check the pitfalls first. Don't let your ego take over in any planned enterprise.

GEMINI (22 May-22 June)
Complete negotiations before the 20th as opposition could come your way. Loved ones won't give support. You feel on your own,

Scribble pad

Answers on page 33

COMPILED BY REBECCA REYNOLDS

- ACROSS**
- 1. Piece of hospital equipment (7)
 - 7. Ace hare (anag)
 - 9, 21. Type of disability (8,9)
 - 10. Modern-day messenger (7)
 - 11. Breadwinner (6)
 - 12. European country (7)
 - 14. Cure (4)
 - 18. Playing games (7,5)
 - 21. See 9 across
 - 22. Frozen water (3)
 - 23. Over there (6)
 - 24. Proverbs (6)

- DOWN**
- 1. Early Cliff Richard song (6,7)
 - 2. European country (7)
 - 3. Neither feminine nor masculine (6)

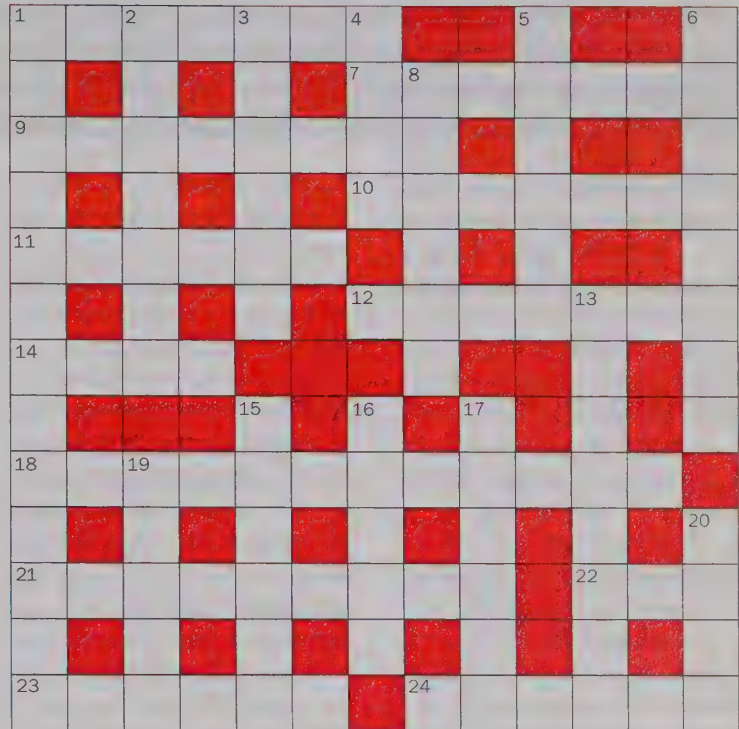
- 4. Harvest (4)
- 5. Part of fireplace (6)
- 6. Enclosed – like an animal (6,2)
- 8. In a circle (6)
- 13. Attractive (8)
- 15. Aggressive (6)
- 16. Middle Eastern country (5)
- 17. Compiled with (6)
- 19. Sticky plant substance (5)
- 20. Disorder (4)

Our apologies for missing out a clue in the January issue crossword. It is as follows: 15 down - Alter (5). Thanks to all eagle eyes for spotting it!

DN's crossword sponsored by

Creating opportunities with disabled people

LEONARD CHESHIRE



but it is only a passing phase.

CANCER (23 June-23 July)
A loved one may present you with a challenge. It's better to sleep on it for a few nights. If you have to resolve the situation, avoid conflict.

LEO (24 July-23 Aug)
An early lucky break could be a red herring. Don't trust anything that looks

too good to be true. Take your time and think things through.

VIRGO (24 Aug- 23 Sept)
Don't try to talk your way out of a sticky situation. Whatever you do will rock a few boats. Your nearest and dearest will support you.

LIBRA (24 Sept-23 Oct)
You could feel that no one understands you. A

break is coming but there's opposition from friends and colleagues. Weather the storm. They will eventually change their view.

SCORPIO (24 Oct-22 Nov)
You will get your point across if you appeal to the heart. You will feel strongly about future changes. Talk it all through sensitively.

SAGITTARIUS (23 Nov-21 Dec)
Trust in friendships not luck. Allow your allies to support you. If you need to make an important decision, consult your best friend first.

CAPRICORN (22 Dec-20 Jan)
Love and the sun shine on you. Bask in the glory and get ready to use your strength for new challenges.

Candid Dan



Bands, Becks and Bells. It's Christmas Dan Batten style

The festive season started with a loud bang, watching my fave band, Machine Head. My favourite song aired very early in the set, with my exuberant response prompting fears from accomplice Ian that I might explode. Not far wrong!

The pace slowed drastically for Christmas itself, with a trip to mum and dad's and an attempt at the world laziness record. A slew of eating ensued, but with more restraint than previous years. Ditto alcohol consumption. Rumours that share values in the Becks brewery consequently plummeted were unfounded.

Presents were of high quality. Dad did cartwheels over his "Man U" parcel, made up of a video of the treble-winning season and "Fergie's" autobiography. It took him a while to get used to his new button fly 501's, almost resulting in a disaster in the pub loo one day. I knew choosing them had comedy value.

My presents included a hands-free kit for my mobile phone and an S Club 7 album. Both had the effect of making me shout loudly, apparently at nothing, while walking outdoors.

New Year took me to Hove, home of Maureen and her daughters. 2000 was ushered in on the beach, being photographed with Maureen throwing the contents of a bottle of Bells down our necks. Why not start as you mean to go on?

The small hours also claimed their first casualty of Y2K, with a 12-year-old discovering that cream soda and crafty swigs of champagne don't mix!

Lastly, my "midnight resolution" was to find the woman of my dreams. I was going to try and make myself more handsome, but realised perfection can't be beaten. I was going to stop lying so much too, but...

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Dear Ann

- love and loneliness
- bereavement
- personal problems
- advice and support

Who better to help you? Ann Darnbrough, who has a disability herself, is co-author of the Directory for Disabled People and other guides. Write to her at Disability Now, 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW or e-mail editor@disabilitynow.org.uk

Holiday help

I read the letter from Belinda (DN, December) in which she described poor holiday accommodation in France. I am sure she would be pleased with the facilities I have in my holiday home in Orlando, Florida.

I am paraplegic and so have a great deal of understanding about a wheelchair user's needs. I discuss any particular requirements my guests might have when they first enquire.

I also have lots of information about wheelchair accessible transport as well as nearby medical centres which rent, sell and repair medical equipment.

Sue Fisher, Salford

I am sure readers will be very interested to hear about your accessible bungalow in Orlando – it sounds ideal.

.....

Citizen's band advice

Regarding the "car phone crisis" letter from Robert (DN, December): he doesn't need a phone at all for one emergency

number. There is no need for him to be ripped off by phone companies.

Seven years ago, I spent £90 on a portable citizen's band (CB) radio that runs off batteries or the cigar lighter in a car. The shop assistant gave me numbers I could call if I needed to. They include the "truckers" number in case other numbers can't be reached. The truckers are great: they have countrywide coverage and whoever I contact can send help.

It was the best £90 I have ever spent. The radio is light and easy to carry round. It has given me peace of mind and there is no licence fee because it is not fitted in the car.

Nora, address not supplied

I know that Robert and other readers will be really glad to hear from you. Many thanks for writing as you did.

.....

Forced to go overseas

I was especially interested to read about myalgic encephalitis (ME) in December.

I had all the symptoms you list as characteristic of ME. Their start coincided with radiotherapy after a partial mastectomy. When the symptoms did not subside, they were considered to be fatigue as a psychological response to cancer. I was unconvinced but accepted it, feeling lucky to survive cancer. I struggled on at work by sleeping at lunchtime and giving up voluntary work and my social life.

Six years later I lost control of my left leg. Scans for tumours were negative and I was transferred from oncology to neurology. I still was given no diagnosis, but the consultant neurologist agreed to co-operate with me in going to Germany for a second opinion at a stage when he had given me no opinion at all.

Within a week of that I had a definitive diagnosis: ME. Its progression was rapid, but becoming a wheelchair user reduced my fatigue and pain, greatly increased my mobility and improved my quality of life.

Barbara, Belfast

Am I just crazy?

I am wondering if you or anyone out there can help. I have an odd condition. It's like multiple sclerosis (MS), but tests show nothing, so is it all due to a mental problem? Am I crazy?

It started about four years ago with a shaking arm when I tried to do anything delicate. Then I had trouble walking, which has got worse. Now I have a cold mouth/palate and numbness in my face, hands and feet. I feel very odd at times in my head and I have problems with my voice and swallowing.

I can't see how all this could be due to anxiety. I had the death of my father to cope with and then I had to re-pass my driving test. I managed these things okay and I usually sleep well. Does this sound like someone who is affected by anxiety?

John, Sunderland

I think it is important that you have your symptoms checked again to see if there is a physical cause. You will have to be very insistent with your GP. You could ask to see a neurologist.

Have you been in touch with the MS Society? I would not suggest that you have MS, but they could provide you with information and they have a helpline.

Thank you for responding to the letter about ME/chronic fatigue.

I am glad you were able to go to a clinic in Germany, but it is pretty dreadful that you could not find the diagnosis of your condition in the UK.

.....

Family planning

While my wife and I are thrilled that we are expecting our first baby, we are also a bit nervous. We are both visually impaired and want to find out what support is available.

Maurice, Cardiff

I can recommend the very thing. The Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) has produced a factsheet which gives tips from blind and partially sighted parents. It covers such topics as

support during pregnancy and getting information in accessible formats.

The factsheet has details of useful organisations, including those which can help you contact other parents. It comes in large print and Braille and on tape or computer disk.

.....

Sue Fisher, 5 Park Lane, Broughton Park, Salford M7 4HT, tel/fax: 0161 792 3029.

MS Society, 25 Effie Road, London SW6 1EE. Helpline, tel: 0207 371 8000.

RNIB Welfare Rights Services, 224 Great Portland Street, London W1N 6AA, tel: 0345 669 999 (cost of a local call).

.....

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DN's telephone counsellor Lin Berwick can give disabled people and carers advice and support on personal and spiritual problems. Disabled herself, Lin is a psycho-therapeutic counsellor and Methodist local preacher, and she has a postgraduate diploma in homeopathic medicine. If you have something you need to discuss confidentially, talk to her on Mondays 6pm-10pm and Thursdays 1pm-5pm, tel: 01787 882111.

Call centres are booming and there can be good openings for disabled people, as Rod Hermeston finds out

Hanging on the telephone

From banking to medical advice, there is usually help at the end of a telephone these days.

Call centres are a boom industry. By 2002 there will be more people working in call centres than teachers and farmers put together.

Catalogues, electricity and gas companies, breakdown services and charity helplines all use call centres.

And for many disabled people a job sitting at a desk, often using just a telephone and computer, can have its advantages.

Qualifications for call centre work vary because of the wide range of services available. The Government's medical helpline NHS Direct, for instance, is staffed by nurses. But many call centres do not require prior qualifications and offer on-the-job training.

What they look for is somebody who is good with numbers, and has keyboard skills and an articulate telephone manner.

You can study for the professional development award while working, which is equivalent to NVQ level 2. Otherwise, some colleges offer a six-week introductory certificate for call centre operators.



On the dog and bone: Eve Strange, 20, is registered blind and works in the South Western Electricity Board call centre. Eve went into the job in September after working in telesales. She deals with calls about anything from power cuts to bill enquiries or requests for new cables to be laid. She uses a Braille display for her computer. "People treat you differently because you are blind, but because I am on the telephone they do not know that I am blind and treat me like any other call centre worker. That is what I really enjoy."

DAVID MCHUGH

Finding a call centre job is often a matter of keeping your eyes open. Claire Campbell, membership services manager

at the Call Centre Association, says: "You can apply for jobs through newspapers and the radio. Employment agencies provide a lot of call centre staff, too, and often offer training."

But call centres have had a bad press recently. Kim Sunley, health and environment researcher at the GMB union, says there are concerns about some staff not getting enough breaks or suffering stress through having to repeat the same thing, and background noise which can harm hearing.

The GMB has produced a leaflet, *Health and Safety in Call Centres*, giving staff advice about their rights.

Ms Campbell says there are no firm statistics on health problems.

Nevertheless, the Government issued standards for staff in its own call centres in December. They include training opportunities for call centre workers and health and safety advice for staff.

'By 2002 there will be more people working in call centres than teachers and farmers put together'

Nowadays telephone work need not be in a call centre at all. It can be done from home. More and more people are "teleworking", a system where calls can be taken anywhere in the country.

A report by the Telework Association and the Institute for Employment Studies, *Virtually There: The Evolution of Call Centres*, found that four per cent of the call centre managers studied use teleworkers and 42 per cent intend to.

Alan Denbigh of the Telework Association accepts

that there are worries about marginalising disabled people by giving them work at home,

'Because I am on the telephone, customers do not know I am blind and treat me like any other call centre worker. That is what I enjoy'

but he says: "For someone with multiple sclerosis, for instance, getting to work can be an exhausting exercise. Increasing work access would be a major step forward."

In fact, the Multiple Sclerosis Society is showing how it can be done. It is piloting a scheme allowing people with MS to be trained to give advice from home on its helpline.

The Automobile Association, too, is offering its 2,000 existing call centre staff the chance to telework, though it does not recruit new staff directly into home working.

Use of teleworking to replace call centres is just beginning, but call centres are already big business.

So, if you are good at dealing with people, why not give it a go? It's your call.

Telework Association, tel: 0800 616 008.

GMB, tel: 0208 947 3131.

Job on the line

Wheelchair user Richard Bailey, 24, who has weak muscles, works as a banking representative for First Direct.

This involves paying bills, arranging transfers of money, organising new accounts and advising on loans.

Richard got the job three years ago.

"I have no problem working on a computer or operating a headset," he says. "They have provided me with an electric wheelchair, which helps when I need to carry folders."

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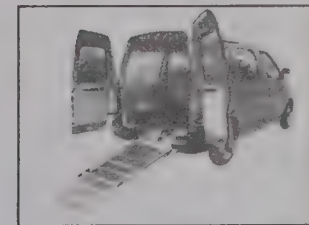
Introducing the new **Mercedes Benz Vito** wheelchair accessible people carrier. High quality with easy access and excellent visibility.

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Tel: 01626 853050

Bright ideas


DN's gadget expert Dan Batten has more nifty ideas for making your home an easier place to live – and sleep – in

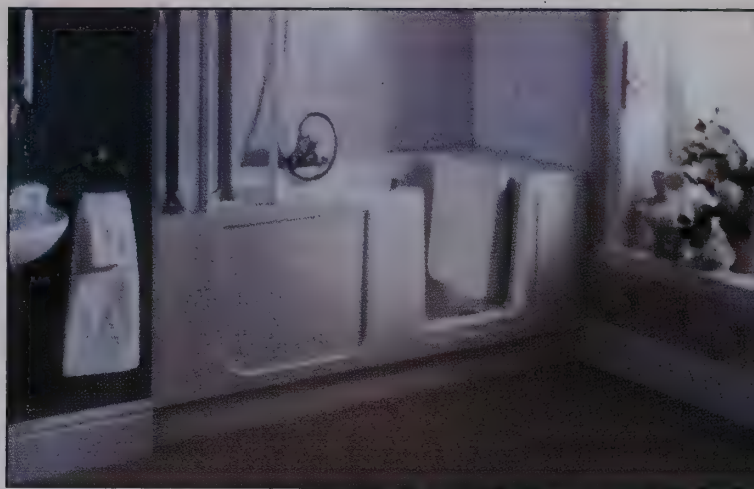
 Are you like me and manage to twist yourself and your pillow into some weird and wonderful shapes in bed? Well, I can't help with the former, but

the Harley pillow might assist the latter. It is moulded from polyurethane foam and is ergonomically designed to support your shoulders. It's also designed to give your neck a

gentle stretch through the night, so you no longer wake up feeling like a boy scout has been using you for knot-tying practice.

£44.95 from Spinal Products, tel: 01422 824910.


 If reading small print is a bit awkward, but you don't need specs, the Ocean catalogue's desktop magnifier might do the trick. Small enough to fit in your pocket, this smart-looking tool

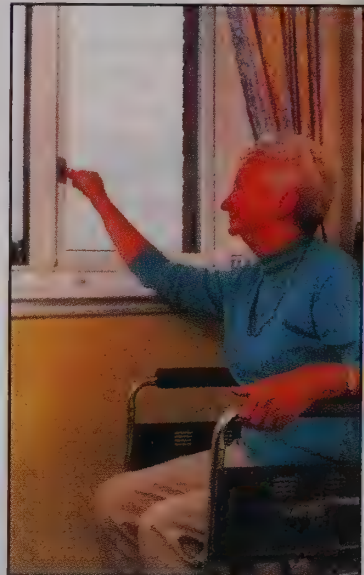


Better bathtimes: Aquarius Bathrooms makes walk-in shower/baths with anti-slip seats and armrests

is useful for checking everything from phone books to the small print in contracts.

£10.95 from Ocean, tel 0207 670 9083.

 Fancy a new bath but find it tricky jumping in and out of an ordinary one? Try splashing out on a walk-in shower/bath from Aquarius Bathrooms. It fits into the same space as a regular bath and has a wide, leak-proof door that opens



Can you handle it? Easi-Reach handles can be positioned where you can get to them

inwards. You can rest on the anti-slip seat and sprawl across the built-in arm rests. If you really want to pamper yourself, you can even have a spa system installed.

£1,795, Aquarius Bathrooms, tel: 01422 367766.

 Windows can be a nightmare to open, with the handles positioned at heights that only King Kong could reach. Easi-Reach equipment lets you reposition the rods that operate the handles, enabling you to open and shut windows more easily. Contact Philip Swann at Winlock Security, tel: 01952 680178.

DN cannot guarantee the quality, price or availability of the products described in the Checkout column.

Hyundai has been voted the UK Automotive Company of the Year 1999 by the European Institute of Transport Management and heralded as "one of the top players in the UK automotive industry".

When we design and build cars like the Hyundai Atoz, who are we to disagree?

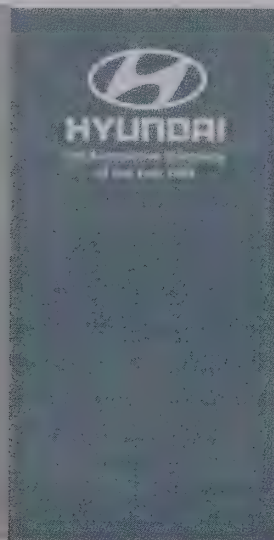
According to Autocar, the Hyundai Atoz represents a "potentially class-busting combination of packaging, performance and equipment". (25.2.98)

And with easy access via 5 doors, power assisted steering, great headroom and superb visibility, the Atoz range starts at just £6,949*.

The Atoz+ has luxuries such as air-conditioning, central locking, electric front windows, alloy wheels, metallic paint and a driver's airbag as standard for only £7,949*.

There's also the option of a 3-speed fully automatic transmission, or (to special order) a 5-speed semi-automatic transmission, still with no advance payment on the Motability Scheme.†

For full details on the Hyundai 'Motability' Scheme and the exciting Hyundai range of coupés, hatchbacks, saloons and estates, call Hyundai free on 0800 981 981 or visit our website on www.hyundai-car.co.uk.



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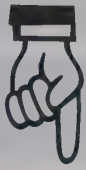
*Hyundai Atoz (manual) at £6,949 and Atoz+ (manual) at £7,949, on the road including 12 months Road Fund Licence (not applicable to recipients of the Higher Rate Mobility Allowance). Optional 5-speed semi-automatic transmission £470, 3-speed automatic transmission £699.

†Subject to status. 12,000 miles per annum. Written details on request.

*This is the trademark of Motability: Registered Charity No.299745



Due to space there is no lineage advert form in this issue. Either use last issue's, or see the panel below



If you don't have an advert form, or you need help filling one out contact Patrick

tel: 0207 619 7320, fax: 0207 619 7331, minicom: 0207 619 7332

or write to him at DN, 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW

Help

POSITIVE-EMPLOYMENT: KIERAN Wright has advertised looking for disabled people to answer a questionnaire with regard to employment. Unfortunately, only 22 people have come forward to date and I need at least 100 people to answer my feasibility study. Wherever you are, if you're disabled, answering a questionnaire could benefit you and other disabled people to get work. For a questionnaire, call Kieran, tel: 01628 478995, or e-mail him at Kieran@positive-employment.co.uk

I AM A DISABLED man looking for someone to help me when I go to meetings. I live in north west London. If you can help, please contact Dave Mills on 0181 868 7900.

THE EAST YORKSHIRE Learning Disability Institute and Scope: exploring unmet needs. We are interested in talking to people who are physically disabled about their unmet needs in the following locations: Sheffield & Rotherham, Leeds, Harrogate, Wakefield Metropolitan District, North & North East Lincolnshire. If you can help, please contact Emma or Jane, tel: 01482 466161/465241.

IF YOU BECAME disabled in 1981, disabled writer Libby Cross would like to hear from you in connection with a book marking 20 years since the UN's International Year of Disabled Persons. If you became, or were born disabled in 1981, please e-mail me at: libby.cross@fdn.co.uk, or tel: 0161 427 4826. Strict confidence guaranteed.

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RECK MOTO-MED Pico electric exerciser, ideal for wheelchair users. Excellent condition. Cost £1,300 new, yours for £600. Tel: 01892 853078.

ELECTRIC BATH LIFT, rechargeable battery. Cost over £800, accept £350 ono. Tel: 01274 882079 (W. Yorks).

MINICOM FOR SALE. Good condition, £70. Contact Reza, fax: 07970 762243.

See also pages 34 & 36

CROSSWORD ANSWERS

ACROSS: 1. Scanner
7. Earache 9. Muscular
10. Postman 11. Earner
12. England 14. Heal
18. Larking about
21. Dystrophy 22. Ice
23. Yonder 24. Adages
DOWN: 1. Summer holiday
2. Austria 3. Neuter 4. Reap
5. Mantel 6. Penned in
8. Around 13. Alluring
15. Fierce 16. Egypt 17. Obeyed
19. Resin 20. Mess

What's on



Disabled Living will hold a series of one-day training courses in Manchester, until July. They include *Understanding Osteoporosis*, 16 February, *Travel in Safety – clamp down and belt up!*, 14 March and *Sexuality – considerations for those working with people with learning difficulties*, 7 June. For a full list of courses, topics covered, and prices, contact Disabled Living, tel: 0161 832 3678, fax: 0161 835 3591. A concessionary rate may be available to health/social care students and disabled people.



The Royal Society of Medicine's Forum on Learning Disability will hold *Therapy in Schools: Problems, Policies and Good Practice*, 24 February, London. It will look at service delivery of therapies, explore models of good practice and discuss ways forward. It will include presentations by physiotherapists and occupational, speech and language therapists. They particularly want to attract teachers of children with learning difficulties. Contact Emma Chaffin, tel: 0207 290 3934, e-mail: emma.chaffin@roysocmed.ac.uk



The Tuberous Sclerosis Association will be holding three future events: *Conference on Renal Involvement in Tuberous Sclerosis*, 6 March, London; *Multi-disciplinary Study Days on Tuberous Sclerosis*, 16 May, Birmingham and 14 June, London; and *Tuberous Sclerosis Millennium Research Symposium 2000*, 13-15 September, Edinburgh. Full details of conference and study days from Janet Medcalf, tel: 01527 579452, e-mail: secretary@tuberous-sclerosis.org. For full details of the symposium contact Ann Hunt, tel: 01993 881238, e-mail: research@tuberous-sclerosis.org



The Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus will hold the conference *Current Concepts and Treatments in Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus*, 17 May, Newport Pagnell. It will look at the latest news from the paediatric surgery and paediatric neurosurgery fields, with input on special needs education and challenging behaviour. Full details from Mary Malcolm, conference organiser, tel: 01733 555988, e-mail: marym@asbah.demon.co.uk



The Rotary and Lions Club are organising *Festival 2000*, a major sports and arts event for disabled people, Waterside Sports Centre, Canvey Island, 6 August. The Essex Disabled Cricket Team and Essex County Wheelchair Basketball Club will be present, and there will be a 5-a-side football competition, plus tennis and swimming coaching. You can also try drama, singing and dance groups. Further details from David Lee, tel: 01702 614886, e-mail: davidlee@heathley.demon.co.uk

Information



South Devon Visually Impaired Association (VIPs) has been awarded charity status, number 1078493. Formed in 1997, the charity provides activities, shares information and raises awareness of the needs of visually impaired people. Contact them at 47 Old Exeter Road, Newton Abbot, Devon TQ12 2NH, tel: 01626 206726.

Guide



Sense, the National Deafblind and Rubella Association, have published *When Vision Changes*, a booklet giving advice on how to cope with your changing sight. Sections include symptoms, reasons, communication, aids and contacts. For a free copy call Lucy Drescher, tel: 0207 272 7774, minicom: 0207 272 9648.

For sale (also on page 38)

PRE-OWNED & DEMONSTRATOR WAV'S FOR SALE

VW Sharan 2.0, petrol, 1995 N, metallic blue. New lowered floor, WAV conversion	£14,995
VW Sharan 1.9, turbo diesel, 1996 P, metallic green 16k miles. Lowered floor conversion	£15,995
Mercedes Vito 2.3, diesel, 1998 R, turquoise, 17k miles. Wheelchair pass' sits alongside driver. Lowered rear floor access, Portaramp, 2 M1 tested tip up forward facing rear seats. Many extras	£16,950
Renault Extra 1.9, diesel, 1997 R, 20k miles, white. Lowered floor, lightweight vision style ramp, new conversion	£8,695
Ford Courier 1.3, petrol, 1992 K, white. Gowrings WAV conversion with lowering suspension	£4,995
Skoda Cube 1.6, petrol, 1999 T, delivery miles only, white. New conversion including lowered floor, lightweight vision style ramp. Big saving on new price at	£12,995
Citroen Berlingo 1.9, diesel, 1997 P, pas, white. Lowered floor, lightweight vision style ramp. New conversion	£11,895
Fiat Scudo 1.9, diesel, 1998 S, white. New lowered floor conversion with lightweight vision style ramp	£14,299
Renault Kangoo 1.8, diesel, 1998 R, white. New lowered floor conversion	£12,995
VW Caravelle 2.4, diesel, 1997 P, metallic blue. WAV with Ricon rear mounted lift	£11,995

All the above vehicles come with our Comprehensive Used Vehicle Warranty



95 Bonnygate, Cupar, Fife KY15 4LG Tel: (01334) 657722, fax: (01334) 657711, e-mail: sales@gleneaglesconversions.co.uk website: www.gleneaglesconversions.co.uk

Recruitment (on pages 33-38)

DISABILITY ADVOCACY NETWORK



FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION OFFICER

Salary: Scale 6, £19,200 inclusive of London Weighting
Hours: 35 per week
Contract: 12 months initially, to be renewed annually subject to funding

A skilled, qualified and experienced administrator is required to provide financial and general administration support to the organisation.

Applicants must:

- Have an understanding of and willingness to work to the social model of disability;
- Relevant experience and qualifications in administration and typing, and be computer literate with knowledge of spreadsheets, e-mail, etc;
- Up-to-date qualifications and experience in book keeping, PAYE, etc.

Applications from disabled people are invited.

BI-LINGUAL SESSIONAL ADVOCATES

Salary: £10 per hour
Hours: To be arranged
Contract: To be agreed with successful candidates

Experienced advocates are needed to be part of a pool to cover for staff absences, times of increased demand, etc. Applicants must speak English and one or more community languages; Sylheti, Somali or Chinese. A knowledge of the effects of neuro trauma would be a distinct advantage.

Applications from disabled people are invited.

Closing dates: Wednesday 23 February 2000

Interviews: Early March 2000

For further details contact: Disability Advocacy Network
Disability Resource Centre
40-50 Southern Grove
London, E3 4PX
Tel: 0181 980 2200
(24 hr answering machine)

CANINE PARTNERS FOR INDEPENDENCE



An innovative and growing charity training puppies/dogs through to placement, helping disabled people, require an

ASSISTANT DOG TRAINER

You will be ambitious, with an understanding of conditioning & behaviour shaping techniques and be located on the Hants/Surrey border.

An opportunity to gain experience under a world renowned Dog Trainer.

Duties will include training, exercising, playing and grooming young dogs along with visiting puppy walkers and recipients in their homes so you will need a full clean driving licence, have a flexible attitude with a willingness to work some weekends and travel.

Experience with disabilities a benefit.

Please reply in writing with CV to:
Heather Caird, Canine Partners for Independence,
The Brickyard Unit E2, Steep Marsh, Petersfield,
Hants, GU32 2BN.

CPI are an equal opportunities employer.

Registered Charity Number 803680

• Personal

GAY GUY, 47, caring and sharing, with own home and car, seeks friends and partner in the south of England/anywhere. Box No. 003

ALAN, 27, SLIGHTLY disabled, lives in the South East. Good sense of humour, likes conversation, cinema, music, eating out. Seeks tolerant, understanding girlfriend for holding hands. Box No. 004

SINGLE, 58-YEAR-OLD male with mild cp. Slim build, 5ft 6in tall, brown hair and eyes, n/s, own home. Seeks quiet, home-loving lady who does not like eating out or clubbing. If you are out there, please get in touch. Box No. 005

MY NAME IS Michael. I'm a Christian astrologer (not professional). I have a rare type of dyslexia, am long term unemployed but have my own house. Interests are history, old-time dancing, piano, newspaper cuttings and steam engines. I'm a young looking 49 and wlm a lady, perhaps younger. I'm 6ft and slim. I live near Bishop's Stortford. Box No. 006

I AM A LADY wheelchair-user, young looking, seeking a very caring man to have a happy life, friendship or maybe more. He must be aged between 35-45 and be caring and kind to me. If possible, please send a photograph. Box No. 007

EDUCATED, FUN LOVING, disabled 37-year-old female seeks sincere male, 30-45. Interests include computers, music, meeting new people and generally having a good time. Box No. 008

GUY SEEKS GIRLFRIEND to share life's excitements and challenges. I'm 26, a wheelchair user, counsellor trainee, working, living in W. London. Interests include music, cinema, reading and the world. Box No. 009

HELLO, I'M GERALD. I am a 30-year-old male with cp. I have my own flat in Glasgow and like football sports, pubs, the net and travel. I'm honest and loving and looking for the right woman to come into my life. I have been all over the world. I work part time in a travel agent. I am looking for someone to spend cosy nights in. I miss hugs, please write soon. Box No. 010

37-YEAR-OLD male with Hydrocephalus, seeks pen pal, aged 20-35, who has an interest and takes part in various sports. Box No. 011

LYNNE, DEAF (P/H), 29, with speech problem, seeks male who enjoys socialising and communicating, 25-35 (patient, soh) for friendship/maybe relationship. Surrey/London. Box No. 012

HI, I'M CHRIS(TIME), 24 years old. I am a cp quad' in a wheelchair. I am an Arsenal supporter. I also like holidays abroad and my computer. I would like to hear from any other F.C. supporters to swap news etc. Box No. 013

EDUCATED, ROMANTIC MAN, young 40, likes countryside, animals, reading, "new age", conversation. Slightly disabled, seeks lady 30+ to hopefully fall in love with. S. Yorks/anywhere. Box No. 014

ABLE MALE, TALL, attractive, blonde, blue eyes with slim to medium build. Very outgoing, kind, caring, genuine personality. I like music, travel, meeting people and wlm female for friendship/relationship. Photo if possible. Box No. 015

See also pages 33&36

For personal ads, submit about 25 words and send a cheque or postal order for £6 payable to Disability Now with your ad. This is to help cover our costs. To reply to a personal ad indicate the Box Number and mark the envelope Private and Confidential. If you do not it will be opened. Send to DN, address on page 2.

• Recruitment (on pages 33-38)

QUEEN ELIZABETH'S FOUNDATION FOR DISABLED PEOPLE

Manager c.£28,000p.a.

Are you a self-starter with vision and enthusiasm preferably with experience of providing information? We are looking for someone with those qualities to manage the small well established team of DISS (Disability Information Service Surrey) based in Dorking.

DISS provides information to the people of Surrey and also a database used by a growing number of other organisations throughout the UK. Hence familiarity with IT systems and marketing would be an advantage and good leadership skills essential.

Interested? For an application form please contact:
The Director, Queen Elizabeth's Foundation for Disabled People,
Leatherhead Court, Leatherhead, Surrey KT22 0BN
Tel: 01372 841100 Fax: 01372 844072 or visit our website:
WWW.QEFD.ORG

Closing date for application: 21 February 2000



Registered Charity No. 251051
An equal opportunities employer
welcoming applications from
all sections of the community

West Of England Coalition Of Disabled People

in partnership with

South Gloucestershire Council

are seeking to recruit Disabled people for the following posts:

DEVELOPMENT WORKER to enable and empower Disabled people and their organisations in South Gloucestershire through the Disability Equality Forum, to make the views of Disabled people known to the Council and to help the Council deliver services founded upon disability equality principles. (35 hrs pw - APT & C pt 29, £18,546pa)

PROJECT WORKER to maintain and develop the Mentoring Project which brings together Disabled children and young people with Disabled adults as mentors and Disabled young people in peer support groups. (17.5 hrs pw - APT & C pt 29, £18,546 pro rata)

WECODP is a community development campaigning organisation of Disabled people working from a disability equality perspective. We are committed toward equal opportunities and we particularly welcome applications from Disabled people who experience simultaneous oppression.

For an application pack for either post, call Berni on 0117 942 0721 (voice & minicom) at The Yard, 6 Sommerville Road, Bishopston, Bristol BS7 9AA, or e-mail us at: wecodp@talk21.com

Closing date for both posts is **Thursday 24 February 2000 at 5pm.** Shortlisting will take place during the week beginning 28 February. Interviews will be held during the week beginning 6 March.

Working Together For Our Equality

Aware

An organisation of disabled people

developing a Disability Equality Training Programme and Strategy in Barnet, needs a

Development Worker

Experience of group facilitation, empowerment and knowledge of training practice essential
18hrs per week (fixed contract for 3 years)
£18,000 - £23,000 pro rata

Closing date: 14 February 2000

Application packs:

c/o Rekha Shah

Barnet Health Promotion Service

Hyde House, The Hyde, London NW9 6QQ

Tel: 0181 201 4759 (with voicemail),

Fax: 0181 201 4716

E-mail: rekha.shah@barnet-ha.nthames.nhs.uk

Please try and call between 9am and 1pm

Please indicate where you saw this advert.

Applications from all sections of the community are welcome, particularly from disabled people

Project Worker

SOMERSET INCLUSION PROJECT, TAUNTON |

£15,600 - £21,500

A Project Worker is required to develop an advocacy service for disabled young people.

You will have a Social Work, Education or Youth and Community Work qualification and experience of working with disabled young people. The post requires commitment to Children's Rights and the values and principles of Inclusion and Disability Equality.

Black people, members of other minority ethnic groups and people with disability are under-represented in the Region and we particularly welcome applications from these groups. All disabled applicants who meet the person specification will be interviewed.

For further information and a statement of Barnardos Basis and Values and Equal Opportunities Policy call 029 2046 2278 (24 hour job-line) quoting reference R880. Closing date: Monday 14 February 2000. Interviews will be held in Taunton on Wednesday 1 March 2000.



www.barnardos.org.uk

Barnardo's

GIVING CHILDREN BACK THEIR FUTURE

WfAD

Waltham Forest Association of Disabled People

WfAD (Waltham Forest Association of Disabled People) wishes to appoint a disabled person as its

Director

salary PO2 point 35 to 38 (£23,319 - £25,215 inc. outer London weighting) for 36 hours a week.

You will have responsibility for the day-to-day management of WfAD's staff, budget, work and premises. You will head a staff team working on a range of projects and will be responsible for ensuring that WfAD meets its aims in all aspects of its work.

A minimum of 18 months staff management experience is required, along with proven budgetary management and fundraising experience. You must have a thorough knowledge of issues affecting disabled people from the whole community.

You will be joining WfAD at an exciting stage in our development, and work with the Management Committee to take WfAD forward into the next millennium.

For an application pack (in print or on tape), contact WfAD, Units 13/14 Alpha Business Centre, South Grove, Walthamstow, London E17 7NX. Telephone: 0181 509 0812 (voice/minicom) or fax: 0181 521 7203.

Closing date for applications is 5pm Tuesday 29 February 2000.

WfAD's office is fully accessible. There is limited parking. This post is open for job share.

WfAD is an equal opportunities employer



SUPPORTING DISABLED GRADUATES

in association with THE PROSPECTS SERIES

THE CAREERS ADVISORY NETWORK ON DISABILITY OPPORTUNITIES

The CanDo Service, University House, Lancaster University, Lancaster, LA1 4YW
Tel/Minicom: 01524 594 370 (please use announcer)
Fax: 01524 592 072
E-mail: cando@lancs.ac.uk URL: http://cando.lancs.ac.uk/

CanDo exists to assist disabled university students and graduates in achieving a successful transition into their chosen careers.

The service is best known for its web site, which provides specialist careers and employment information to disabled students and graduates. New services are also under development including disability awareness training to Careers Services; CD-ROM version of Web service; and training seminars for disabled graduates.

CanDo is pleased to acknowledge funding for these positions from the National Lottery Charities Board



Managing Director & Company Secretary

Manchester c. £21,500 p.a. full time Ref: 01MDCS

A dynamic Managing Director is sought who has the knowledge, business acumen, and experience to head the organisation. Reporting to the Board of Directors you will have day to day responsibility for the effective management, marketing, development and fundraising for the CanDo Service. You will demonstrate a dynamic approach to the development of new initiatives, along with financial and commercial experience. You will also have an understanding of and commitment to removing the barriers to employment faced by disabled graduates.

Employer Liaison Manager

Manchester c. £15,200 p.a. full time Ref: 01ELM

This is an exciting opportunity to play a leading role in the development of a network of Employer Supporters committed to supporting CanDo's work, and to encouraging equality of opportunities for disabled people in the workplace. You will be responsible for developing this subscription-based network, which is at the core of the Service's strategy for income generation. You will demonstrate excellent communication skills along with a knowledge and commitment to disability issues and equal opportunities. Previous sales and marketing experience is desirable.

Closing date for applications: **Friday 18th February 2000**

For further information and an application pack, please contact David Filmer at the address above quoting the appropriate job reference number. As an equal opportunities employer, we welcome applications from all sectors of the community. All applications will be treated in strict confidence. NB: Both positions will be based at the CanDo Service's new offices in central Manchester, to which the service will be relocating shortly.

Want your advert to reach more people? Why not put your advert on DN's website?

Contact Richard, tel: 0207 619 7336, or Patrick, tel: 0207 619 7320



Help get the Millennium off to a healthy start!

Your opportunity to take part in healthcare at a national level in 2000 and beyond

The Secretary of State for Health is looking to appoint a number of people throughout 2000 as non-executive Chairs or members of special health authorities, specialist executive committees and specialist advisory committees. The special health authorities are national bodies and each has a distinct and specialist role. Specialist executive committees perform a vital role by carrying out a wide range of administrative, regulatory and commercial functions. Specialist advisory committees advise Ministers and the Department of Health on matters in their sphere of interest. These are senior positions of leadership in complex organisations and are demanding in terms of intellectual ability and personal skills. Some of the posts will require particular professional expertise but all of them require people committed to the NHS with good judgement, analytical skills, sensibility and a strong team working approach. During 2000 we anticipate vacancies in the bodies listed below. Time commitment and remuneration, where payable, varies according to the needs of the particular body and the level of responsibility. This information is included below under each of the individual body headings.

Vacancies for lay members

- **Dental Practice Board** - An NHS body based in Eastbourne. Its main tasks are to vet claims and make payments to dentists in England and Wales, and to prevent and detect any fraud or abuse of the payment system. Has vacancies for two lay (non dental) members and is looking to fill these posts as soon as possible. Board members spend 8 to 10 days a year at the Board for which £164 a day is paid.
- **Medical Practices Committee** - A specialist executive committee based in London. Meets weekly. Ensures an even distribution of the GP workforce within general medical services throughout England and Wales. Will have a vacancy for a Chair from 1 April 2000. The post is part time (around 22 hours per week) and will attract an annual remuneration of £34,070, although, subject to Ministerial approval, more might be available for an exceptional candidate. The Chair will be expected to contribute to a forthcoming review of the role and functions of the Committee and also to any other developments around primary care resource allocation methods.

In addition to the posts above there are a number of vacancies on the bodies below. These appointments are made by the Crown following advice from Privy Council.

- **General Medical Council** exists to protect patients and the public interest by regulating and guiding the medical profession. The full Council meets 5 days a year but much of the work is done through committees so that, with reading and preparation included, a total commitment of some 15 to 20 days a year would be required. Will have around five vacancies for lay members. The posts are unpaid but there are allowances for lost earnings, travel and subsistence costs.
- **General Dental Council** exists to protect patients and the public interest by regulating and guiding the dental profession. The full Council meets on 4 or 5 days a year but much of the work is done through committees so that, with reading and preparation included, a total commitment of some 15 to 20 days a year would be required. Will have vacancies for around 6 lay members to start in Autumn 2000. The posts are unpaid but there are allowances for lost earnings, travel and subsistence costs.

If you want to serve the NHS in any of these ways please call 0113 254 6452 during office hours Monday to Friday stating which posts you are interested in and we will send you an information pack. The closing date for receipt of completed applications is 14 February 2000 - **we are unable to accept any applications received after this date.**

The Department of Health welcomes applications regardless of gender, race, disability or sexuality. A guaranteed interview scheme is available for people with a disability who meet the minimum criteria for appointment.

The Department of Health is committed to the principles of public appointments based on merit with independent assessment, openness and transparency of process. Political activity will not be a criterion for appointment but candidates must subscribe to the objectives of the body in which they are interested.

Vacancies for specialist members

- **Dental Vocational Training Authority** - A special health authority based in Eastbourne. Meets 3 times a year at various locations throughout the country. Attendance Allowance of £109.50 a day. Adjudicates application for training from dentists wishing to join Health Authority dental lists in England & Wales. Will have up to 20 vacancies for members to start in October 2000 and who must be registered dentists.
- **Appeal Body (Dental Vocational Training Authority)** - An NHS body based in London. Hears appeals from dentists against decisions of the Dental Vocational Training Authority. Will have a vacancy for a Chair, who must be a qualified barrister or solicitor and up to 20 vacancies for members who need to be registered dentists from April 2000. Chair allowance £286 per day. Dentist member's attendance allowance £183.50 per day.
- **Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants** - A specialist advisory committee which gives independent authoritative advice to the Government through the Chief Medical Officer on the medical effects of air pollution. Meets three times a year. Will have vacancies in June/July 2000 for specialists in the fields of epidemiology, toxicology, pathology, respiratory medicine and paediatric respiratory medicine. Attendance allowance £86 per meeting.

Bodies with vacancies for both lay and specialist members

- **National Blood Authority** - A special health authority based in Watford. Responsible for meeting NHS need for blood supplies and blood products in England. Will have a vacancy for a Chair from April 2000 and two members from November 2000. The Authority are also looking for two members to start as soon as possible. One of the members must have a background in industry. Time commitment for Chair is around 3 to 3½ days a week and about 1-2 days a month for members. Current annual Chair remuneration is £21,510, £5140 for members.
- **Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority** - A specialist executive committee based in London. Regulates and monitors licensed centres providing infertility treatment involving IVF, donor insemination, egg, sperm and embryo donation and related research. Will have vacancies for up to two specialist and three lay members from November 2000. Time commitment is around 3 days a month. Attendance allowance £135 per session.
- **United Kingdom Xenotransplantation Interim Regulatory Authority** - A specialist advisory committee which acts as the focal point for consideration of xenotransplantation issues. Also offers advice to the Government including advice on the acceptability of applications to undertake xenotransplantation procedures in the UK. Looking for an extra lay member and a scientific member to start in April 2000 with expertise in the fields of immunology, infectious disease, virology or physiology, to supplement the current board. Meets 4 times a year but additional attendance might be required as necessary. Attendance allowance £135 per session.

Disability Now is not responsible for claims made in the advertisements it prints and all readers are advised to check claims with the advertisers before relying on them.

Cars/vans

CHAIRMAN ESCORT 1.4. 28,800 miles, rear lowering hydraulic suspension system for wheelchair passenger plus 3 seats. MOT July 2000. Excellent condition. £4,000. Tel: 01594 842554.

RENAULT TRAFIC CRUISER, 1996, P reg, electric Ricon tail lift, 26k miles. Immaculate condition. MOT October. Can carry two wheelchairs. £9,995. Tel: 01202 872507.

HAND CONTROLS FOR Ford Fiesta and Nissan Micra. £100 each. Tel: 01279 434607.

VOLKSWAGEN CARAVELLE, M REG, June '95, 2.5 petrol, auto, pas, tail-lift, electric windows, 2 mirrors. MOT June 2000, 62k miles. Excellent condition. £12,500. Tel: 01275 892189.

NISSAN SERENA, N REG, Brotherwood conversion, 23k miles. Immaculate condition. £12,995 ono. Tel: 01279 507200 (Bishop's Stortford).

RENAULT CARAVANETTE RENOIR, can carry a wheelchair and 4 passengers. Fridge that can operate on electricity, gas or batteries, folding ramps, high top, twin/double bed. £6,000. Tel: 0181 204 0934/3293.

VW CARAVELLE GL, 2.5 auto, carries 2 chairs and 5 passengers. Side ramp, fsh, petrol, 1 owner, P reg, 50k miles, excellent condition. £14,500 ono. Tel: 0208 448 4318.

FIAT FIORINO 1.3, L reg, 47k miles, MOT Nov' 2000, ramp, electric winch, white, 4 seats plus wheelchair. Good condition, £3,250. Tel: 01594 529689.

CHAIRMAN ESCORT VAN, E reg. Converted to take wheelchair using passenger. Lowering rear suspension and ramp for easy access, driver/passenger (plus one side facing seat). Good condition for year (needs some slight bodywork attention). 75k miles on clock, service records. £3,500. Tel: 01639 831301.

DAIHATSU HIJET 1997, wheelchair passenger's ramp and winch. 10k miles, superb condition, one driver, metallic silver. £5,500. Tel: 01524 761166.

FORD TRANSIT, FEB' 94
28k miles, fsh, Ricon lift, seats 5 plus wheelchair. £6,750. Tel: 0181 657 3228 or 0181 668 3987.

ELAP ROTATING PASSENGER seat plus fittings for Mondeo and Golf. Any offers? Call Ruth, tel: 0181 850 4518.

Accommodation

DETACHED 4-BEDROOM HOUSE in Dereham, Norfolk, with a passenger lift suitable for wheelchairs. Near the town centre and shops. £139,000. Tel: 01362 694047.

Wanted

WHEELCHAIR-ABLE ACTRESS wanted for élat film. For more information call Mark, tel: 07879 654900.

ADAPTED VEHICLE, AUTOMATIC, power steering, electric windows, swivel seat and hoist, hand controls, 2 access doors if possible. Person with MS. Tel: 01692 650901 (Norfolk).

Combined adverts

SUNRISE P100 BREEZY electric wheelchair, June 99. Fold-up Invacare attendant wheelchair. Walking frame commode toilet surrounding and raised seat. Offers invited. Tel: 01932 347122.

Recruitment (on pages 33-38)

Jobs@Bristol

We are now recruiting our front of house team and are looking for a number of smart, bright and enthusiastic individuals, who are passionate about working with people. This is for you if you are an exceptional communicator, keen to share your own curiosity about science, art and the natural world with a wide variety of people, all of whom deserve individual attention. So if you care about customers, we want to know about you. All positions are available as full-time, part-time, or casual posts, as we will be open 7 days per week. We welcome applications from all age groups and sections of the community, and from volunteers who may be interested in these positions. Full training will be provided.

Application details

For a job description and application form for these positions
Recruitment line (open 20 January 2000)

Tel: 0117 915 8888
Minicom: 0117 914 3475
Monday to Friday 9am - 5pm

By post send a sae quoting the ref to:
Recruitment Assistant address below

at-Bristol, Deanery Road,
Harbourside, Bristol BS1 5DB
Email: personnel@at-bristol.org.uk
Internet: www.at-bristol.org.uk

Selection event 01 / 02 March 2000
Final interviews 09 March 2000

All job descriptions are available on audio tape

Floor Staff

£10,000 - £12,000 pro rata Ref: FLO

You won't be shy about helping all our customers get the most from their visit. Life will be varied, but never dull - you might find yourself interpreting exhibits, giving demonstrations, or even running a workshop.

You will be able to obtain and hold the interest of different groups (size, cultural mix, age), relay information in a fun and interesting manner, meeting any situation with efficiency and a ready smile.

Closing date for applications 15 February 2000

Retail and Admissions Staff

£10,000 - £12,000 pro rata Ref: ADR

Promoting @Bristol's full range of facilities, you will relish helping customers make the right choices - whether they are looking for a special gift, an all star ticket, or just a cup of coffee.

Comfortable with numbers and calm under pressure, you will be keen to make retail and admissions part of a seamless visitor experience.

Closing date for applications 15 February 2000

Bookings Staff

£10,000 pro rata Ref: BKG

Making customers feel comfortable on the telephone will come easily to you. As with the rest of the team, your skills in active listening, combined with a natural infectious enthusiasm, will ensure you help customers easily to pre-book services which fit exactly with their needs.

Calm and efficient under pressure, you will be keen to learn how to use one of the most sophisticated ticketing and advance booking systems available.

Closing date for applications 15 February 2000

Projectionists

£12,000 pro rata Ref: PRJ

Operating and maintaining some of the world's most advanced 2D/3D GT projection, sound and vision equipment in @Bristol, you will be able to communicate your passion for film to the widest possible audience.

Closing date for applications 16 February 2000
Interview date 06 March 2000

The outstanding new destination on Bristol's Harbourside, a place where science, nature and art come to life. Opening from Spring 2000, it will create a dynamic heart for the city, drawing visitors from all over Britain, Europe and beyond.

Explore@Bristol

Visitors to Explore@Bristol will discover, experience and enjoy science in ways never dreamt of before

Wildscreen@Bristol

Wildscreen@Bristol will be a world first - offering a unique combination of small animals, plants and the latest in sound and vision technologies

Open Spaces@Bristol

A magnificent series of Open Spaces and new art works linking Wildscreen and Explore, with plenty of places to shop, eat, or simply relax

IMAX®@Bristol

The largest and most breathtaking cinematic experience in the West of England - a four-storey screen will put visitors right inside the action

For general information on @Bristol please contact the Visitor Information Centre
Tel: 0117 921 0529



Bristol



A MILLENNIUM PROJECT
SUPPORTED BY FUNDS
FROM THE NATIONAL LOTTERY



South West of England
Regional Development Agency



Wheelchairs/scooters

PRIDE RISER/RECLINER powerchair. New cost £900, accept £600 ono. Tel: 0181 252 9577 (Essex).

NEWTON ROYALE INDOOR/outdoor electric wheelchair, 18in wide seat. Also left hand controls for user and attendant. Vgc, £750. Tel: 0121 351 5927.

ORTHOKINETIC CLASSIC FOLDING electric wheelchair with electronic controls and charger. Good condition. £900. Tel: 01420 538623.

SUNRISE POWERTEC F45 electric wheelchair, kerb climber. Good condition. £900. Tel: 0115 917 4731 (Notts).

BOOSTER PUMA POWER wheelchair, in pristine condition; it has only been used a few times. Has all the functions such as tilt-in-space seat raiser, reclining back rest, all done from control box. £6,500. Tel: 01865 775465.

SUNRISE F50 POWERCHAIR, 18in seat, little used. £1,850 ono. Tel: 01283 762256.

SUNRUNNER 3-WHEEL ELECTRIC scooter, vgc, £700. Tel: 01703 271410.

ORTHOKINETICS LARK 3, 3-wheel scooter with rear carrier, raincape and charger. 9 months old, hardly used. New was £1,800, accept £1,100 ono for quick sale. Tel: 01353 698569 (Cambridge).

SUNRISE EXPLORER 4-WHEEL scooter (SPEP 406). New in June 99, virtually unused, includes charger etc. Range 23 miles, max speed 6 mph. List price £3,995, accept £2,900, can deliver. Tel: 0181 220 2745 (home) or 0374 119 783 (mobile).

2000

Classified deadlines
for the March issue:
Booking deadline is
11 February
Copy deadline is
15 February

See also pages 33&34

Recruitment (on pages 33-38)

Promoting Equal Rights For Disabled People

DISABILITY WEST MIDLANDS

Prospect Hall, College Walk, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 6LE
Telephone: 0121 414 1616 Fax: 0121 414 0077 Text Phone: 0121 414 1188

Manager: All Administration

£17,000 - £18,000 negotiable

We are an organisation committed to the social model of disability. We are urgently seeking an individual with an understanding of disability issues to manage every aspect of the administration of our organisation and the management of junior staff. The successful candidate will be required to demonstrate experience in the various areas of modern administration and a commitment to disability issues.

For an information pack telephone 0121 414 1616
E-mail: disabilitywm@netscapeonline

Closing date: 28 February 2000

Design Options for a Versatile Environment D.O.V.E.

seeks a

Direct Payments Support Worker

committed to the social model of disability. Personal experience of Direct Payments and issues around independent living. Sound knowledge of appropriate legislation.

Good communication skills, ability to use a computer for storage and information retrieval, correspondence, leaflet production. Ability to be mobile around Portsmouth. 30 hrs per week, salary and conditions on request.

D.O.V.E. is managed by disabled people.

Information or an application pack from D.O.V.E., 85 Northern Road, Cosham, Portsmouth PO6 3AH, tel/fax: 023 9278 7788, text: 023 9278 3284.



LEEDS
CITY COUNCIL

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT

Building Control

ACCESS OFFICER

P03 £23,895-£26,001

Leeds City Council is committed to making its services accessible to all disabled people. A £4m budget has recently been approved for capital works to council premises and the Access Officer has a key role to play in determining how and where this money will be spent.

The successful candidate will lead the development of corporate access strategies and standards, run a corporate officer working group and ensure disabled people are regularly consulted as well as advise departments on a range of access issues.

The successful applicant will have at least 3 years' experience as a practising Access Officer or consultant, a sound knowledge of the DDA and guidance on access, direct experience of disability and a commitment to disabled people's equality and the social model.

Applications from black and ethnic minorities and disabled people are particularly welcome, since these groups are currently under represented in this type of work.

Application packs and further information are available from Support Services, Department of Planning, Selectapost 5, Merion House, Merion Centre, Leeds LS2 8SH. Telephone (0113) 247 8041, minicom (0113) 247 4305.

CLOSING DATE: 28 February 2000.

"WORKING TOWARDS EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY"

The City Council has a No Smoking Policy.

FULL-TIME POSTS SUITABLE FOR JOB SHARING

KNOWSLEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH



KNOWSLEY
METROPOLITAN BOROUGH

Disability Employment Co-ordinator

£23,895 - £26,001 (2 years fixed term)

Citizenship and Social inclusion Unit

We are seeking a highly motivated person to lead in the development of a strategy for improving access to employment opportunities for disabled people in Knowsley.

The successful applicant will make a significant contribution to the strategic planning and service developments in relation to employment and disabled people within Knowsley. Promoting and supporting the implementation of the developments identified in the strategy.

The post holder will be expected to develop effective strategic and operational linkage between Council Departments, external statutory and independent sector agencies and regeneration initiatives in relation to employment and disabled people.

You should have excellent inter-personal, communication, planning and commissioning skills with the experience of developing services in a related area of work. It is essential that you have a knowledge and understanding of the legislation affecting employment and people with disabilities.

For an informal discussion please contact Paul Cummins, Community Safety Co-ordinator, on 0151 443 3512.

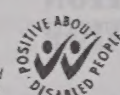
Further details and application forms are available from:
PERSONNEL SECTION, LEISURE AND COMMUNITY SERVICES
DEPARTMENT, PO BOX 22, HUXTON, KNOWSLEY,
MERSEYSIDE L36 9YX.
TEL: 0151 443 3843 (24 HOURS)

CLOSING DATE: 14.2.00



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

We particularly welcome applications from people with disabilities, people from ethnic minority groups and people from other under-represented groups within the Council's workforce.



LEISURE AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

To advertise in the Classified section contact
Richard Gresham or Patrick Durham Matthews on
the contact details on page 2

Bursaries

BBC News

Sponsorship Scheme

Have you got News for us?

The launch of our News Sponsorship Scheme will ensure BBC News support for eight of the most talented students starting a post graduate course in broadcast journalism in 2000.

The scheme will be open to all students who have successfully gained a place on one of the participating courses. Our selection process will run independently of each course and final decisions will be made only when college and university places have been confirmed.

We will pay your course fees and make a contribution to your living expenses and also offer up to four weeks work experience. We will also provide you with a BBC News Mentor who is likely to be a senior editorial figure. Whilst there is no guarantee of a job at the end of your course, we will give you all the support we can to help you with your next step.

We will be looking for excellent interpersonal skills, drive, resilience and an unwavering commitment to a career in journalism.

The BBC aims to reflect the UK's diversity in our programmes, our services and our workforce.

For an information pack, including a list of participating academic institutions, contact us online at www.bbc.co.uk/jobs/e42808.shtml or contact: BBC Recruitment Services by March 7th (quote ref. 42808/DI and give your name and address) Tel: 0181-740 0005. Textphone: 0181-225 9878. Postcard: PO Box 7000, London W12 8GJ. E-mail: recserv@bbc.co.uk Closes: March 10th.



Working for equality of opportunity

Services

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Payday Services provides payroll services for voluntary and non-profit making organisations, home carers, charities (no VAT) and SMEs.

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Tel: 01536 373111 Fax: 01536 373123



2000

Classified deadlines for
the February issue:
Booking deadline is
11 February
Copy deadline is
15 February

Personal

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galore are waiting to
make contact with you.
Join Handdate and discover
their talents!
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Fax: 01473 254030

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Able-bodied or Disabled
Choose Your Own Ideal Relationship

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Overseas +44 + 1606 49093

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Supporting the Child with Severe Learning Disabilities

A diploma home-study course from
The Learning Institute.

For free details, phone:

01934 713563

The Learning Institute

FREEPOST SWB 753,

Wedmore BS28 4ZZ

<http://ds.dial.pipex.com/institute>

Situations wanted

VIDEOS Former TV reporter who now has
MS and is a wheelchair user, seeks writing and
research work. Offers Media Awareness
Training and video production.

Contact David, tel/fax: 01332 755520
e-mail: varowatson@callnetuk.com

Holidays

SCOPE IN IPSWICH/ EAST SUFFOLK

Holidays for the disabled and carers.
5/6 berth caravan 400 yards from
Felixstowe sea front and promenade.

Details and bookings for 2000,
please contact: Jim Bone,
20 Victoria Street, Felixstowe IP11 7EW,
Tel: (01394) 282288.

Disability Now is not
responsible for claims made
in the advertisements it
prints and all readers are
advised to check claims
with the advertisers before
relying on them.

THE ALEXANDER TRUST

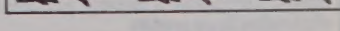
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Tel/Fax: 01225 337178

E-mail: richard@alextrust59.freemove.co.uk

www.exculink.com/~road/alexhomepage2.htm



• Recruitment (on pages 33-38)



BRENT ASSOCIATION OF DISABLED PEOPLE

EMPOWERING DISABLED PEOPLE SINCE 1970

Co-Director

Job share, 17.5 hours per week, £27,813 inc. LW pro rata

Brent Association of Disabled People wishes to recruit a disabled person to this challenging post of Co-Director of a staff team committed to disabled people's self-organisation.

You will need the following skills:

- Financial management, preferably in the voluntary sector;
- Ability to develop this large, successful user-led organisation representing disabled people in Brent;
- Knowledge of disability legislation and policies;
- Ability to liaise and negotiate with statutory agencies and organisations to develop good practice on disability issues;
- Understanding of working in a multi-cultural community;
- Ability to represent diverse interests of disabled people using a range of strategies including advocacy, negotiation and campaigning;
- Experience of managing a well established organisation and ability to lead and motivate a dynamic, enthusiastic staff team of ten people;
- Possess clear presentation and training skills;
- Service BADP's Management Committee and act as Company Secretary.

For a job description and application form, apply to Brent Association of Disabled People, 154 Harlesden Road, London NW10 3RX, tel/minicom: 0208 451 3822, fax: 0208 451 7803, e-mail: badp@poptel.org.uk. Information is available on tape. BADP is an equal opportunities employer and based in a fully accessible building. A no-smoking policy is in operation.

Closing date for returned application forms is: Friday 11 February 2000.

Interviews will be held on: Wednesday 1 March 2000.

CROYDON VOLUNTARY ACTION

DIRECT PAYMENTS SUPPORT ADVISER

SO2/32 £21,675 (including OLW)

full-time, 36 hours pw, 2 year fixed term contract

The Direct Payments Support Adviser will enable eligible users to join Croydon's new Personal Assistance Support Scheme by:

- designing and delivering ongoing training to new and existing scheme users;
- providing information and support to scheme users on recruitment of Personal Assistants, responsibilities as employers, managing funds, peer support, etc;
- assisting in the development and growth of the scheme.

Applications are sought from individuals who have experience of disability issues and the social model of disability; of working with a variety of individuals and groups in an enabling capacity and of designing and delivering training courses.

Applications from disabled people and people from minority ethnic communities are particularly welcomed.

Closing date for applications is 21 February 2000.

For application packs please contact Croydon Voluntary Action, 97 High Street, Thornton Heath, CR7 8RY. Tel: 0181 684 3862, Fax: 0181 665 1334

E-mail: cva@library.croydon.gov.uk

CVA is an equal opportunities employer

Registered Charity No. 1060157

Company Limited by Guarantee No. 3271298



Access Ability Lothian, a disability led organisation, in co-operation with the Universities of Edinburgh and Stirling, wish to appoint an experienced researcher to work on a project entitled "Experiencing Inclusive Education - what does it mean?"

This study is funded by the National Lottery Charities Board Health & Social Research Programme for two years.

The overall aim of the project is to make the voice of disabled people heard in the debate about inclusive education within the academic arena. The research will examine current educational provision in further and higher education and assess how inclusive this education is and if current provision is in accord with the expectations of disabled people themselves.

Salary PO1 (£22,083 - £24,194pa) for two years.

For further information contact Andy Gough, Project Administrator, Access Ability Lothian, Norton Park Centre, 57 Albion Road, Edinburgh EH7 5QY. Tel: 0131 475 2505, fax: 0131 475 2392, e-mail: aal@accability.demon.co.uk

Closing date: 8 February 2000.



Lothian Centre for Integrated Living (LCIL)

LCIL is a dynamic user-led organisation which aims to provide choice and equality of opportunity for disabled people. Lottery funding has been awarded to extend our Peer Counselling Service (counselling by disabled people for disabled people) for a further 3 years.

PEER COUNSELLING CO-ORDINATOR AP5 £19,827 - £21,637

An opportunity to manage a small team, to extend existing training and counselling opportunities for disabled people, and to develop new services. Experience of staff/volunteer management, project development, knowledge of counselling and training issues essential.

DEVELOPMENT OFFICER AP4 £17,322 - £19,224

To publicise and promote the service to disabled people in Edinburgh and the Lothians, to increase take up of the Service, and to develop new ways of offering the Service such as telephone counselling. Experience of promotion or marketing, good communication and presentation skills and basic knowledge of counselling issues essential.

For further information, in all formats: Tel/Minicom: 0131 475 2350
Closing date: Friday 11 February 2000,
Interviews: Co-ordinator 25.2.00, Development officer: 29.2.00.

Applications from disabled people particularly welcome.



Shaw Trust is involved in an exciting new service in conjunction with Providence Row Housing Association - Weavers Fields Café and Community Space, Tower Hamlets - and is looking to recruit a team of people to provide training, work placements, employment and support for disabled and disadvantaged people and to develop the service to be an accessible, inclusive and multi-use venue for the people of Tower Hamlets.

Café and Training Manager

Starting Salary: £20,250 per annum

Salary Range: £20,250 - £22,250 per annum (inc. London Weighting)

You will be required to manage the Weavers Fields Café and staff and be responsible for development and delivery of quality training programmes and all commercial services associated with the Café. You will need to have experience of training for catering qualifications, experience of managing a café or similar catering business and leading an effective team. Ref: 1304

Chef / Trainer

Starting Salary: £18,750 per annum

Salary Range: £18,750 - £21,250 per annum (inc. London Weighting)

You will be responsible for the delivery of quality food and service in the Café and also provide high quality and accessible "on-the-job" catering training. You will need to have previous chef experience, experience of "on-the-job" catering training, be innovative and self motivated. Ref: 1305

Service Development Officer

Part Time: 18 hours per week Starting Salary: £17,250 (pro rata) per annum

Salary Range: £17,250 - £19,450 per annum (inc. London Weighting)

You will be responsible for the overall commercial development of the Café and training facilities and the development of the Café into a sustainable business. You will need to have experience of co-ordinating, developing and marketing a project/service, have excellent interpersonal, communication and presentation skills, possess good influencing skills and be able to negotiate at all levels. Ref: 1306

Progression Officer

Part Time: 18 hours per week Starting Salary: £17,250 (pro rata) per annum

Salary Range: £17,250 - £19,450 per annum (inc. London Weighting)

You will be responsible for the smooth and effective journey of each Service User through the Café placement and training and then assist them to progress into employment or further training. You will need to develop a comprehensive assessment process and individual vocational profiles and action plans. It is essential that you have previous relevant experience in an employment/training placement field, possess excellent interpersonal, communication and presentation skills together with good organisational, time management and administrative abilities. Ref: 1307

Although these positions are offered on a part time basis we would also consider one full-time person if you felt you had the necessary skills and experience to meet the requirements of both posts.

It is essential for all positions that you have an understanding and awareness of the needs of disabled and disadvantaged people, are a good team player, have a flexible approach to work and the ability to cope with a variety of demands. It is desirable that you have experience in the employment/training related field and have experience of working with disabled and disadvantaged people.

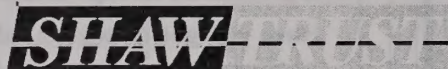
Closing Date: 11th February 2000

The Shaw Trust is a nationally recognised voluntary organisation concerned with developing and maintaining work opportunities for people with disabilities. Shaw Trust is committed to equal opportunities and welcomes applications from all members of the community. An interview is guaranteed to any applicant with a disability or health problem, if they meet the essential criteria of the job specification.

An Application Form and Information Pack are available from: Lucy Duddridge, Shaw Trust, Shaw House, Epsom Square, White Horse Business Park, Trowbridge, Wiltshire BA14 0XJ.

Tel: 01225 716304. Minicom: 0345 697288.

(CV's will not be accepted).



ila (essex)

Independent Living Advocacy (Essex)

Independent Living Advocate

Commencing salary £19,750 on a two-year contract with possibility of renewal. Job share considered.

Independent Living Advocacy (Essex) is an advocacy organisation dealing with all disability groups throughout Essex. Offering formal advocacy on a wide range of issues and acting as the support organisation for Direct Payments in Essex. ILA (Essex) prides itself on achieving lives with greater control and choice for it's clients.

This post arises because of the impending extension of Direct Payments to older people and the post will involve development work in this area. The post will take a lead on older people but will not exclude working with other disabilities.

Applicants must have diverse skills ranging from advocacy to accounting skills, they must be IT literate and car owners. It is likely that they will be required to work from home. Applications from disabled people are particularly welcome.

Closing date for receipt of applications: 18 February 2000.

Applications may be made using the application form, by CV, e-mail or on computer disc.

For further information and an application pack please write to: ILA (Essex), Homelands Retail Park, Cuton Hall Lane, Springfield, Chelmsford, Essex CM2 5PX, or e-mail: ilaessex@edpass.org, or tel: 01245 318436/37.

For an informal discussion about the post please telephone Mr C Lovell, Advocate Manager, tel: 01245 318437.

BRISTOL DIAL-A-RIDE

is a door-to-door minibus service for disabled people. Due to office reorganisation we are seeking:

FINANCE OFFICER (part-time)

With experience in financial systems and the SAGE accounting package.

Hours: 17.5 per week

Salary: £14,766 pa (pro rata)

Closing date: 11 February

Interviews w/c: 21 February

Apply to: Bristol Dial-A-Ride, Greenway Centre, Doncaster Road, Southmead, Bristol BS10 5PY, tel: 0117 959 0700.

Disabled people are encouraged to apply.

Funded by Bristol City Council.

• Volunteers

Disabled Volunteers Wanted!



Shape needs disabled volunteers for a wide range of arts projects and events.

- Fully accessible.
- All expenses paid.
- Training available.

Contact Antoinette or Vikki on:

Tel: 0207 700 0100 ext 285

Fax: 0207 700 8143

Text: 0207 700 8187

Interviews w/c: 14/2/ 2000

Shape London is a registered charity



• For sale

Powerchairs Mobility Consultants

New and Nearly New, Electric Wheelchairs, 3 and 4 Wheel Scooters.

All models wanted and for sale.

Ring Free anytime

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All major credit cards accepted

U.S. VANS ARE BETTER DEALS

VanFare, USA is a tetraplegic owned company specialising in new and previously owned adapted mini or full size vans for disabled driver, passenger or group transport.

Contact: VanFare, USA 11 School St., Essex, MA 01929 USA

Phone: 001 978 768 6228

Fax: 001 978 768 6404

E-mail: vanfare@tiac.net

http://www.tiac.net/users/vanfare

Disabled children can ride conventional tricycles from Combat 2000. Age range 2-12 yrs. Each machine is customised for each child. For more details tel: **01952 610746 (West Midlands).**

WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE VEHICLES BOUGHT AND SOLD

Selection of one owner, low mileage vehicles available. I try to cater for most price ranges and models.

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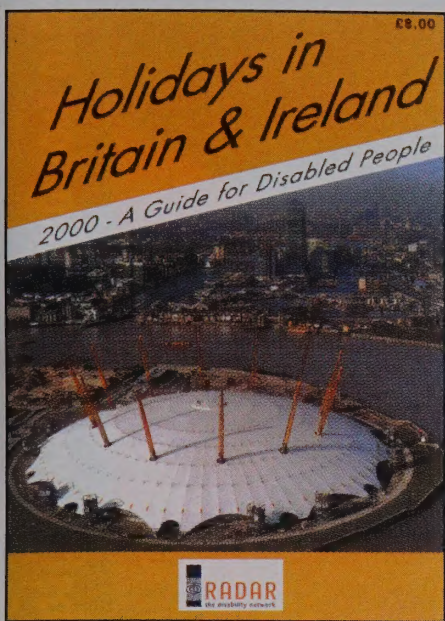
Information Phone 01993 842885

Accessible Vehicle Register

We specialise in locating used vehicles to suit the specific needs of our customers. If you are looking for an accessible vehicle or have one to dispose of, contact Adam Price. We also supply and install all forms of access equipment.

01202 814112

adam.price@lineone.net



each to give away.

The guide is crammed with information on the accessibility of accommodation, including city hotels, guest houses, lodges, self-catering, caravan sites, holiday parks and specialist centres. And there's also a section covering activity and special interest holidays.

There are about 1,500 entries, from Shetland to Jersey, and from Galway to Great Yarmouth.

For further help, it also lists organisations that

Access in 2000

With DN's holiday features on-going, what better offer can there be for would-be travellers than *Holidays in Britain & Ireland 2000: a guide for disabled people*, published by The Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation (RADAR)?

What's more, DN has six copies, worth £8 (inc. p&cp)

may offer advice or services to disabled travellers.

- If you don't win a copy, you can still order them from the publications department at RADAR, 12 City Forum, 250 City Road, London EC1V 8AF. Alternatively order using ISBN number 0 90027013 6 from all good bookshops.

Making life a little easier



Here's your chance to start the new millennium in comfort. Thanks to Tensor Marketing we have three fantastic prizes (there are two of each) aimed to make life that bit easier, for lucky DN readers.

First, there's the Lift Assist Seat. This hydro pneumatic lift (retail value £69.99, *above left*)

is easy to use – it follows the body's natural motion, gently helping the user out of a chair.

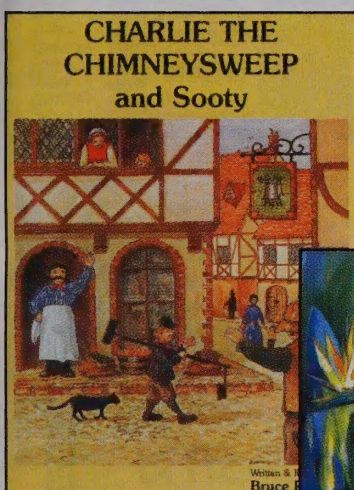
Second is the Revolving Car Seat (retail value £19.99, *above right*), which removes the strain from getting in and out of your car. It can also be used on home chairs, where space is a premium, and is ideal for anyone with back pain.

Last is a real fashion statement – the Magnetic Watch (retail value £24.99, *below*). It uses an accurate



quartz movement to keep perfect time, and comes with an expanding magnetic bracelet that will fit wrists of all sizes. (Please state whether you want a Ladies or Gents watch when entering.)

- For those unlucky entrants who wish to receive a brochure showing these and other products, contact Tensor Marketing, tel: 01325 469181, or visit their website at www.tensormarketing.co.uk



Christmas cheer

them something they'll continue to use for ages.

The Association of Mouth and Foot Painting Artists (MFPA) has reprinted *Charlie the Chimneysweep and Sooty*, written and illustrated by Australian MFPA member Bruce Peardon.

This heart warming seasonal story about a lucky child

chimneysweep will keep the Christmas magic alive for any young children.

DN has three copies of the book, worth £8.95 each, to give away to readers.

What's more, we also have a copy of the MFPA *Calendar 2000*, worth £3.95 each, for the three winners. Each of the months of this handy sized calendar is illustrated by an MFPA member.

- Even if you don't win, you can still order the book using ISBN number 0 90715941 9.



Christmas has come and gone, and many children's new toys will be long dumped in a box. Well, here's your chance to give

Branson's lost it

There are few people who can lay claim to being so successful in most they try. Fewer still that the public actually feel affection for.

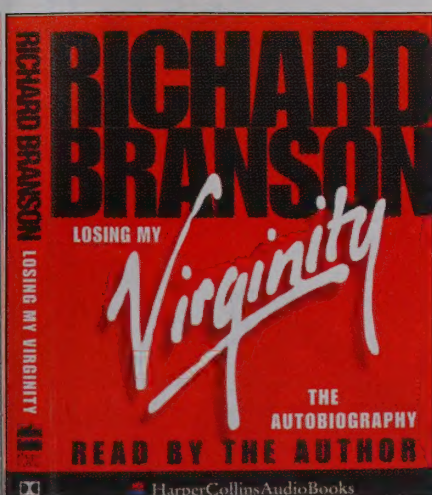
Richard Branson is one, and this is his account of how it all

happened. DN has six copies, worth £12.99, up for grabs.

In *Losing my Virginity* Branson describes how he, and his wife Joan, have made Virgin the success it is today. As the *Sunday Business* said in its review: "This is an incredible autobiography – a great read – sex, balloons, intrigue and money".

So, if you want to get inspired for the new millennium, put your name and address down on a postcard now!

- If you are an unlucky entrant, you can still order a copy by using ISBN number 0 00105594 1 at all good bookshops.



To enter

- Send you name and address on a postcard marked Lift Seat, Revolving Car Seat or Watch, RADAR, MFPA or Virgin, and send to the address on page 2.

Terms and conditions

- Closing date: 28 February 2000 • Entrants must be over 18 • No proof of purchase required • UK entrants only • No cash alternatives • Winners notified by post • DN reserves the right to use winners for future publicity • Editor's decision is final • Special offers not open to DN staff or associates

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Future perfect

Tomorrow's technology

All you need is love

DN's Valentine guide to sex
aids and skills



Jobs

p33-38 and on our website: www.disabilitynow.org.uk

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9.00am - 5.30pm
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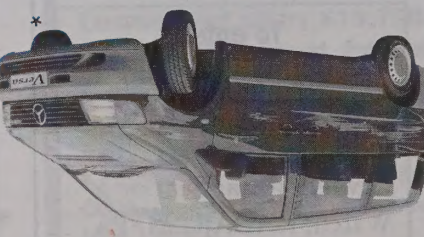


Renault Traffic
1.9 diesel
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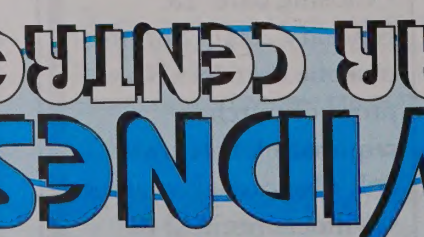


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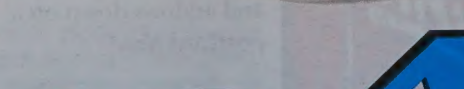


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